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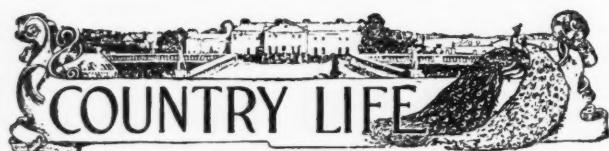
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SPEAIGHT.

MRS. FRANCIS EGERTON AND HER CHILDREN.

157, New Bond Street, W.



THE Journal for all interested in

Country Life and Country Pursuits

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EDITORIAL NOTICE.

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THE STATE AND POOR CHILDREN

A CONSIDERABLE agitation has been going on for some time past in regard to the national treatment of those children whose parents cannot, or do not, feed them adequately. Like many other questions, it has several sides to it, and we hope that a matter of this kind will never be thrust into the arena of party politics, there to become a bone of contention. In fact, the use of political terms in regard to it is to be deprecated. Certain proposals have been brought before the provincial municipalities and discussed by them. The root idea is that it is quite useless to relieve the hunger of poor children at a moment of acute distress and then to fling them back to their families to be again misused and under-fed. But at first it would be necessary to make some definition. The State has long recognised a certain responsibility for the absolutely destitute, and if children are really starving they can be taken to the workhouse and fed. But in that case the Poor Law Guardians would have power to proceed against the parents of the children, and oblige them to pay for this maintenance. Now there may be two opinions as to the advisability of putting children in the workhouse; there can be only one in regard to making the parents responsible for their offspring. A very large proportion of the class of children we are referring to ought never to have been born at all; their fathers and mothers in many cases not only lack the means to support a family, but are so low in physique that they have no prospect of producing any but the most feeble children. Without undue interference with the liberty of the subject, it would be difficult to insist on a man and woman passing the doctor before being allowed to enter into the bonds of matrimony. No practical proposal, at any rate, has ever been made to render such unions illegal; but the evil that springs from them is patent. They do but perpetuate disease, feebleness, and decay. The only machinery by which the State can operate against imprudent marriages is indirect in its character. Virtually, what the law says to a man and woman is, "You have been responsible for this child coming into the world, and until it is fit to take care of itself it will be your duty to do so." But then it may be answered that this is theory pure and simple. The State has already assumed to itself some of the duties that used to be considered parental. For one thing it educates the children; we do not know that it is a good arrangement, because experience has shown that where fathers and

mothers have had to attend to the schooling themselves, they have prized it much more. Yet, having taken that step, there can be no objection to an extension of the principle. At least, so the would-be reformers argue.

One objection, then, to the State maintenance of poor children is that it would tend to weaken the sense of responsibility in the least desirable class of parents. If young men and women on the very outside fringe of society see that there is no cost attending the having of children, they will be encouraged to marry and produce offspring which are bound to form the weakness of the State. The scheme, in a word, seems to us impracticable. At any rate, to carry it out thoroughly would require a most expensive machinery, because it would be necessary to ascertain in each individual case that the parents were not shirking their duties. If a man be earning wages, then he ought to pay for the support of his own family. That is the elementary principle. Those who desire a change, however, do not regard the problem as being so simple. Many of the fathers who allow their families to starve are in regular employment, and it often happens they are actually well paid; but the money that ought to go to the purchase of food is spent at the public-house. In other words, the drink question is inextricably mixed up with the matter. Obviously it is very unjust to visit on the child the iniquities of the parent, and the boy or girl will be equally hungry whether the money that ought to have bought food be not earned at all, or, if earned, is wasted. In either case it is not available for the purpose of relieving the hunger of the sufferers. Looked at in another way, the relief of a drunkard's child is the same thing as making him a present of money to buy for him what is destroying soul and body. No such relief should be given unless accompanied by the most stringent measures for obliging parents to do their duty. That is why we say each individual case would have to be investigated and reported upon. We are afraid, too, that unless a whole school were relieved an invidious distinction would be made, and the little community would find itself divided into two sections—paupers and non-paupers. If, on the other hand, it were decided to relieve the whole of the scholars in the poor districts of large towns, then the State would be taking upon itself a responsibility so vast that we can see no limit to it. It might almost as well accept the wildest revolutionary dreams, or the fantastic notions of Mr. Bernard Shaw, and establish institutions for the general nursing of infants. That, of course, would be the means of bringing family life to an end altogether, a result that could scarcely commend itself to any except those extreme cosmopolitans who are but impracticable dreamers and visionaries.

We are, however, at present not so much disposed to apply destructive criticism to any suggestion put forward, however wild it may appear, as to gain, if possible, an intelligent view from every possible standpoint. There can be no doubt that a great evil stands in need of removal. It is only a truism to say that the future of the country belongs to the younger generation, and those who may be described as the foodless form a weak and diseased part of it. It is certainly not their fault that they are too often descended from parents who are unsound, both in body and mind. They have inherited disease, and they have acquired it. They have lived in an atmosphere calculated to destroy any notions of morality that they may have started with, and, as we have said, it is a misfortune that they should be allowed to have children. In the case of those who are utterly destitute, perhaps the best solution of the problem that has yet been found is that of taking the children when they are very young—that is to say, before they have come to an age when they can be polluted by their surroundings—and shipping them off to Canada, or some other agricultural colony. There they are cut off from all that contaminates, and have a chance of growing up into useful and creditable citizens. But then this scarcely touches the immediate difficulty, which concerns those a shade higher up in the social scale—that is to say, children who have friends and relatives who, in ordinary circumstances, would be able to see that they obtained the ordinary necessities of life, but who, in times of commercial depression, are not able to carry this out, or who, owing to their own bad habits, are not able to devote even a moderate share of their income to such an elementary duty as that of feeding their children. The danger of the State taking their place is that it may render them more irresponsible than ever, and encourage the bad habits which account for this state of affairs. On the other hand, it would be too arbitrary to interfere forcibly between parents and children by sending the latter overseas. At present, in fact, no very plausible solution presents itself, and we can only suggest further discussion as a possible means of elucidating the right method of treatment.

Our Portrait Illustration.

OUR frontispiece this week is a portrait of Mrs. Francis Egerton and her children. Mrs. Egerton was the daughter of the late Rev. Canon Curteis, and married in 1897 the Hon. Francis William Egerton, second son of the Earl of Ellesmere.



AT Easter this year the weather, though so bitterly cold in some parts of the country that snow actually fell, was, on the whole, dry and not unpleasant, so that the enormous number of holiday-makers had fairly good grounds for satisfaction, and their numbers were beyond any previous record. One railway company alone carried over 100,000 people out of town in a single day, and this was only one of some half-dozen great holiday traffic lines, every one of which had more than the usual quantity of passengers. This shows that there is a great deal of truth in what Mr. Austen Chamberlain said in the course of his Budget speech, to the effect that the people of this country are gradually changing the style of their pleasures, giving up the old habit of loafing round the public-houses, and other forms of amusement, in favour of spending their leisure in the open air, either at the seaside or in the rural parts of Great Britain.

Among the more dubious of the celebrations at Eastertide, we must count the keeping of Shakespeare's birthday at Stratford-on-Avon. It is impossible to avoid the reflection that this kind of celebration in Great Britain always tends towards vulgarisation. About half a century ago the late Harrison Ainsworth got up a revival of the Flitch of Bacon festivals at Dunmow, and these have become simply a burlesque of the old annual custom. We all know what the Burns birthday dinners are like, to take a notorious case of anniversary keeping. It would be a great pity if the keeping of Shakespeare's birthday became the occasion of a similar kind of demonstration, and this reminds us that the international memorial to Shakespeare, which is contemplated in certain quarters, runs a very similar danger. After all, it is difficult to see what good results from this rapidly-growing practice of keeping birthdays, centenaries, and tercentenaries. There is room to doubt if they bring a single new reader to the writer who is the object of it all, and the only memorial that is really worthy of the poet is that of being constantly in the minds of his successors.

Easter Monday saw the beginning of the cricket season, which the late Mr. Ford used to indicate in the articles he contributed to our pages by the single word "Play." The counties do not begin their campaign against one another until May comes in; but the play previous to this is always interesting, as the captains take the opportunity, afforded by matches, on which nothing depends, to try the colts who have developed some kind of capacity during the course of the past year. Several of these are very promising indeed, and from their performances on Monday last it is fairly safe to prophesy that, before the season is over, one or two names will be added to the list of popular famous cricketers. Generally speaking it is expected that the season will be rather more interesting than the last one, as the Australians are sending a team over which ought to be able at least to hold its own with the pick of the English counties.

Happily no ill result, beyond the considerable amount of alarm, has been recorded as attending the earthquake in the Midlands; in fact, it can scarcely be described as an unusual occurrence. According to a very great authority, some 30,000 earthquakes occur all over the world in the course of every twelve months, and usually some six or seven of them happen in Great Britain; but it is a very long time since there was an earthquake in this country that did serious damage. We seem to have settled down into a condition of quiescence which is very different from that experienced, say, in the Himalayas, or in Japan, where seismic disturbances are still moulding the landscape. The final report on the late earthquake in India gives the number killed as 15,000—a terrible contrast to the trivial mishaps which fall to be chronicled in England.

Few of the modern generation of Eton cricketers are probably aware how much they owe to the tradition infused into the game by the great cricketer and coach whom all his contemporaries knew and loved, when alive, by the name of "Mike" Mitchell. Born in 1845 at Enderby, near Leicester, he was educated at Eton and Balliol, and was for many years a very successful house-master at his old school. As a schoolboy cricketer he was the greatest of his day, and accomplished the remarkable feat of scoring seventy out of ninety runs for Eton against Harrow in 1860. Even in his first year at Oxford he was distinctly the best bat in the eleven, and in his second was elected captain of the eleven, and held the post during the two following years also. At neither of the classic Universities has such an honour been held for three years by any other man, and in every year of his captaincy the Oxford eleven was victorious in the 'Varsity match. Of the best judges of the cricket of that time there is not one who will not roundly assert that, with the inevitable exception of Dr. W. G. Grace, the late Mr. Mitchell was the finest batsman the world had then known. The brilliance of his hitting on the leg-side of the wicket, especially to square-leg, has always been spoken of as the feature of his game, but it was combined with a rare patience and faculty for watching the ball on wickets that were a great deal more difficult and tricky than those of to-day.

But in spite of such qualities as a player, it is rather as a coach that the name of Mr. Mitchell will go down to fame. For thirty-five years he was a master at Eton, and during all that time one may say that there was not a cricketer that left it who was not formed under his eye and by his care. And the record of great cricketers thus produced is a striking one, including the brothers Lyttelton, the brothers Studd, Ottaway, Thornton, Ridley, Longman, and Forbes. One might fill the page without exhausting the famous names, and not one of them was there who would not have admitted with pride that a large measure of his success was due to the coaching and example of "Mike." His ardent and earnest love of cricket, and of Eton cricket in particular, was in especial evidence on the great occasions of the 'Varsity match at Lord's, where the stereotyped expression, an "interested spectator," conveyed but a very feeble idea of the engrossed and conscious tension with which he followed every incident of the game. His loss will be lamented not only as that of a good cricketer and a good coach, but also of a good friend and good fellow.

OH! CUCKOO.

When first I heard thy dancing note,
What blissful dreams it set afloat
Of deep delights to come.

Since then my heart has lived a span,
Has learned that pain, not joy, outran
The race in life for love.

Ah, me! I greet thee still in spring,
Though now thy notes a dagger bring
To drive the contrast home.

Oh! cuckoo. G. M. S.

Since Professor Ray Lankester assumed the Directorship of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, its sphere of usefulness has materially increased. Not the least valuable of his innovations is undoubtedly that which has given us the really wonderful collection of domesticated animals brought together in the north hall. The greatest care has been displayed in the selection of specimens for this exhibition, and now that it is nearing completion—though it will never be complete—its value as a teaching factor and as a witness of the evolution theory cannot be overestimated. To the fine series of dogs has just been added a collection of skulls of the bulldog, which for many reasons is of peculiar interest. The origin of this animal is to be traced to the mastiff. The extraordinarily shortened muzzle, protruding lower jaw, and short, wide-set legs, which now distinguish the bulldog from its more handsome ancestor, have been acquired by the selection on the part of the breeder of those variations of the parent breed which tended to increase efficiency for the barbarous sport of bull-baiting beloved of our forbears. Two of the oldest of these skulls are of a distinctly mastiff type, one especially so. A third skull, of the most typical bulldog character, differs, however, from the modern breed in its huge size. As this is known to be of very ancient date, it would seem that the peculiar shape of the head became a fixed character before the reduction in the size of the body.

That destructive little creature, the wood-mouse, sometimes called the long-tailed field-mouse (*Mus sylvaticus*), seems more than commonly plentiful this year. No doubt, the late growth of the spring foliage and grasses in the hedges gives rather unusual facility for its observation; but, apart from that, it appears that its numbers really must be abnormal. The wonder,

perhaps, is that they are not greater, for this little creature has three litters in the year, and seven or eight young in a litter. The game-preserving tendency, with its destruction of stoats and weasels, and only too often of the wholly-beneficent owls and kestrels, reduces the natural enemies of this mouse, which is a scourge to the garden, not only because of what it eats to satisfy its immediate hunger, but because, unlike the dormouse, it does not hibernate, and lays up for itself a large store for winter consumption.

It has been said that the English are a masterful race, and nowhere do they show this more than in the determination to carry their own amusements with them into whatever country they may chance to go. For example, our colonists in South Africa wanted to have some fishing, and so they started a Transvaal Trout Acclimatisation Society, which has already achieved a considerable amount of success. It has its headquarters at Johannesburg, with branches at Pretoria and Potchefstroom, there being a hatchery at the last-mentioned place. It consists of five ponds, fenced round with willow trees for the purpose of giving shade. Somewhere about 23,000 fry have been turned down in the various rivers, and are already beginning to afford good sport to the angler. It seems that the rainbow trout are doing extremely well, and no doubt in the near future trout-fishing will be one of the regular amusements of South Africa.

There is still some agitation going on about the quality of London milk, and it certainly deserves attention. The latest figures show that about 13 per cent. of the samples taken for analysis are adulterated, and it is the custom to judge these very leniently, or, in other words, the amount of added water has to be considerable before magistrates will convict. The health of the community, however, demands that greater strictness should be observed. It is a very reasonable standard that the Board of Agriculture demands, and one that the owner of a good herd of dairy cows very often exceeds. In that case he is under great temptation to add water to bring it down, and should he be inclined to cheat as well, the amount of added water is very great indeed. But that is not all. Much of the milk sold is undoubtedly "made up," and there are materials in it much less wholesome than water. It would be an interesting experiment if some enterprising dairyman would offer to sell under suitable guarantee the very best milk from Jersey cows at a price that would be remunerative to him. There is every reason to believe that he would find an abundance of customers, and an example of this kind would probably have a great effect in stimulating competitors to offer a purer and better class of article.

On the whole, it is likely that the decision reached in the case "*The Attorney-General v. Antrobus*," in the matter of the ancient monument of Stonehenge, will give satisfaction to the majority of reasonable people. That decision is to the effect that Stonehenge is the private property of Sir Edmund Antrobus and his heirs, and that only by his or their grace and licence can the public have any access thereto. Of course, all depends on the manner in which the owner may choose to exercise the rights which the law has now absolutely committed to him, and, so far as the present owner is concerned, he has made it fully apparent by his attitude during the whole of the controversy, and of the legal proceedings, that his purpose is very far removed from any jealous desire to exclude the public from a place of unique national interest, but is, on the contrary, to preserve intact the objects that give it their quite unique interest. Whether a better way of subserving this purpose might have been found, as, for instance, by handing over the whole circuit of the hill to some public body, is a question that did not come before the Court in which the case was tried.

Literally speaking, a well-graced actor has left the stage in the person of Joseph Jefferson, who, after a life well over the three score and ten allotted to men by the Psalmist, died at Florida on Easter Sunday. He might almost be called an actor of one part, for, though he played many parts, his name is most closely associated with that of Rip Van Winkle, which he dramatised himself from the well-known story of Washington Irving. He played it with great acceptance, both in the United States and in Great Britain, to which he paid several noteworthy visits. He had many friends in this country, among whom, perhaps, the poet Robert Browning was the most remarkable. The two were in the Highlands together in 1876, and Browning had a curious fondness for his actor friend. Jefferson was a man who thoroughly understood not only his own gifts, but his own limitations; and, though once or twice he made the mistake of taking up parts not quite congenial, he had the good sense to reject many such proposals as that of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, who wanted him to play King Lear. He may be described as an actor of very exceptional, though not of the highest, merit.

An event of more than French interest was the resignation of M. Delcassé, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his sub-

sequent consent to resume the portfolio he had given up. To us the matter was one of very great importance, as it is well known that M. Delcassé's influence has been steadily exerted in the direction of deepening and extending the bond of union between France and Great Britain. He saw clearly that the hostility between two neighbours, separated only by a narrow sea, was both stupid and mischievous. In many respects the interests of the two countries are identical, and this is likely to be even more so in the future than it has been in the past, while the same danger menaces both. M. Delcassé had the good fortune to meet in Lord Lansdowne a statesman who shared his views, and without whom he could not very well have carried them out. But it has to be remembered that long before recent developments had begun, and as early as the time of the Fashoda affair, when he was new to office, he set himself with heart and mind to avoid any quarrel with England. His retention of office, therefore, is one more weight added to the scale on the side of peace.

THE MIGHTY MOTHER.

Strange is thy calling, O Earth, and happy who hears it of thee
Blown in the wind of the dawn, breathed from the plough-shorn loam
Loud in the voice of the bird, strong in the fluttering tree,
Deep when the stain is low in the west, and the rooks throng home.
For the south wind stirs on the meadow, the deep grass bows
As a bright wave sways and gathers athwart the sea,
And his heart's gates open together upon his brows
With the throb of the life that leaps to be kin to thee.
How dost thou hasten the blood with an ancient might
And sound in a straitened spirit thy godlike call,
O mystic Earth, sped round with fleeting light,
Noons, and winged rains, and gleams of evenfall!
And they that have heard thee are filled with a fiercer motion,
The red stag leaps from the thicket, and they beside;
They shoot a sail, and skim the storm-gored ocean,
They spread their hands, and mount its towering tide.
Blest, blest is he on whose dim eyes of wonder
Dawned field and woodland through the dews of birth,
Whose feet grew strong in silent ways asunder,
Who stayed his spirit on the ageless Earth.
Years have no power to wrest him from that keeping,
Life brings no pain to make him long forget,
Deep in his heart he knows a soul is sleeping,
Songs of the dawn shall wake him once more yet.

ANTHONY COLLETT.

The revenue figures which Lord Cromer is able to report from the Soudan are of an encouraging character, and give ground for very sanguine anticipations of the internal prosperity of that great region in the near future. It is not yet seven years since the power of the Khalifa was finally broken, and the mass of the territory recovered which he and his predecessor had laid waste with fire and sword. The outlook then looked so black that the Cairo Government was thought in many quarters to be unduly sanguine when it estimated the probable revenue at £8,000. Now, however, the Soudan revenue amounts to nearly half a million, and is rapidly growing every year as the land is brought back into cultivation, and its former limits extended. The Treasury at Khartoum is now accumulating a surplus over the expenses of administration, and, when it becomes possible to undertake further reproductive public works, the increase should be yet more rapid. A work of reconstruction is going on south of the old Wady Halfa frontier, which is fully as remarkable as that already achieved in Egypt.

Striking testimony to the increasing prosperity of the population of India is given in a little volume recently published by the Maharajah of Burdwan, one of the most enlightened of Indian rulers. There is no surer criterion of the wealth of the people than the jewellery worn by the girls and women, which represents to a great extent the family savings, and the writer describes how in the villages of Bengal silver is replacing pewter in the manufacture of the women's ornaments, and in many cases even gold is now beginning to be worn. So, too, satins and silk are more and more coming into use among the women for their holiday costumes, whereas formerly cotton garments were usual even on the greatest occasions. The men are also giving up cotton clothes for warmer woollen ones during the cold weather.

In the South Western States of North America, such as Arizona and California, the normal cause of the fruit farmer's and the rancher's anxiety in spring is an absence or an insufficiency of rainfall for the young floral growth. This year in these States the exceptional rainfall, although it is so beneficial to the country generally, has occasioned more than a little inconvenience, and the "wash-outs" on the railway lines have been very serious in their extent and frequency. Several train-loads of passengers are reported to have narrowly escaped starvation owing to detention by "wash-outs" in districts where food was scarce.

A NORTHUMBRIAN FARM.

SOME little time ago the Board of Trade published a most interesting official book on the earnings of agricultural labourers. It was in reality a second edition, but the compiler of it, Mr. Wilson Fox, had added certain valuable information, to which we directed attention at the time. He took a number of farms as typical of the rest, and made what one might almost describe as a literary map or picture of each. We were much struck by this original departure at the time, and resolved to have photographs taken, with the consent of the owners, for the purpose of showing the farm life that goes on in England for the greater part of the year. To-day we offer the first of the series. It is Mr. Rae's holding of Middleton, situated in the north part of Northumberland. The country-side is so very beautiful as to make us feel sorry that we decided to begin with this one, because it



C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

FOUR TEAMS AT WORK.

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CARTING MANURE.

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would have been so much more beautiful at a later period of the year, when not only would the distant Cheviots look lovelier in the summer sunlight and the skies wider and clearer, but all the beauties of the scenery could have been displayed to perfection. However, we do not know that so much is lost after all. As our group of farm servants would in itself show, the indubitable virtues of the North are often concealed under a very rugged exterior, and a something stern in the landscape is certainly not out of place. The farm is of a type which would be very unusual in the South of England. It has the enormous extent of 3,700 acres, which in many parts of England would be considered a fair-sized estate; but then 1,900 acres consist of rough mountain pasturage, where the great flocks of sheep wander and graze at will. Last year there were no fewer than 3,180 sheep on the farm over one year old and

upwards, while the number of lambs was 2,600. To attend to these immense flocks there are five shepherds and two assistants—that is to say, two of “the herdings” are double, and, in common parlance, their hands are full, since herding sheep in the hill country is far from being child’s play. Every evening the flocks have to be taught to go upward to the mountain tops, for various reasons. One is that the air is purer and better, and another that the animals thus escape from the torment of insects that would prevent their sleeping during summer. For a great part of the year the shepherd needs to rise at dawn, in order to drive his charges down to the gladders or valleys in which the most succulent pasturage grows. He is as a rule an alert and vigorous man, accustomed from childhood to climb these toilsome hills, but this work would be too laborious, even for his tough muscles, if he were not served by the best of colliers, animals who recognise his cry at a distance from which they look only like specks on the hillside, and obey his signals with an intelligence that would do credit



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A MORNING PARADE.

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to human beings. During the busy portions of the sheep year, that is to say, at lambing and clipping time, it is necessary to have still more assistance, and three extra lads are then engaged. The shepherds form quite a section by themselves, those of lower degree being responsible to the head-shepherd, who is to them what the steward is to the other labourers. The engagements at Middleton, as in other places in the North of England, are not so short as is customary in Suffolk or Norfolk, but are made for the year, "In rain and shine, and in sickness or in health." The men get no extra cash payment, but then the rate of wages is a high one compared with that prevailing in other counties. Most of the shepherds are paid partly in cash and partly in kind, but one or two are paid wholly in kind. The following is an example: A shepherd, not a hill one, but whose flock is on the lower ground, has 26 ewes and 12 ewe hoggs kept. His allowances are 2 cows kept, 8 bowls (a bowl equals 6 bushels) of barley, 11 bowls oats, 50 stones flour, 2½ bowls beans, free house and garden, 2,000yds. of potatoes, coal carted free, and



C. Reid.

FIELD FOREMAN.

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straw for pigs. He pays his own assistant a wage varying from £26 to £28 a year and his keep. Under these conditions a skilful shepherd is often able to lay by money, and if enquiry be made concerning the farming families of Northumberland, it will be found that a great many of them originated in this way. A single shepherd on the hill receives £40 a year in cash, with 5 bowls of barley, 5 bowls of oats, 2 cows and 1 heifer kept, 24 bags of potatoes, a free house and garden, 1,000yds. of potatoes, coals carted free, and straw for pigs. Out of this he has to pay and find a man to assist him in lambing-time. It will be seen



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FOOD FOR THE FLOCK.

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THE HEAD-SHEPHERD.

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that he, too, has plenty of scope for his enterprise, and has an interest in his own stock as well as in his master's; while we have to remember that in those districts there is practically no outlay for food. The cows supply plenty of milk, and the "kist" is generally full of meal and flour, out of which the goodwife makes her oat cakes, her girdle cakes, and her household bread. The refuse of the potatoes supplies food for the pigs, and the garden makes them independent of the greengrocer. In a word, there is no labourer in England who, on the whole, has a happier life than the hill shepherd in Northumberland. It is true he is out in all weathers, but then his occupation is one of the most engaging, and well the angler and the tourist know what a pleasure it is to encounter these men. Their speech may be rough, but it is generally frank, their hospitality is unbounded, their thoughts are simple and wholesome, and their manner of life is the healthiest conceivable.

To return to the farm, however; there are 600 acres of arable land on it, and on these are cultivated the ordinary crops, barley and oats, potatoes, roots, and temporary grass. When

the figures were taken there were 16 milking cows on the farm and 90 cattle not meant for the dairy, while the number of farm horses was 20. To work all this land, there are, in addition to the shepherds, 2 stewards and 2 ploughmen stewards, 8 binders, and 4 spade hands, 2 byremen, 5 lads and boys, 2 leading women, 8 women workers earning full women's wages, and 2 women earning less. The women are the daughters or sisters of the men employed on the farm. These women form a

feature in agricultural life which has not a counterpart in the Southern Counties. Not long ago, a well-known agricultural authority declared that a time was coming when there would not be a single woman worker left in England. These figures certainly do not confirm that statement, and, on the whole, it does not seem desirable that the prophecy should ever come true. It may be argued that agricultural labour is hard and coarse for delicate feminine fingers, and that it engenders a corresponding coarseness in those who have to do it. But no great sympathy need be felt with this feeling. The women lead healthy open-air lives, and compare very favourably, both in morality and physique, with the factory hands, ill-paid sempstresses and domestic servants of the town. Without them it would not be possible to carry on agricultural labour in Northumberland, because the rural exodus has to a very serious extent diminished the available supply of men. The pay of the women, as may be observed, is 1s. 8d. a day nearly all the year round, and 3s. a day for twenty days at harvest. Their homes are all on the farm, so that this wage enables them to live in comfort; in very great comfort indeed, as compared with the farm servants in the Eastern Counties, where there are many men with families to keep who do not earn higher wages. The regular wage of a ploughman is 17s. a week in cash, a free house and garden, coals carted, 1,000yds. of potatoes, and straw for pigs. In four cases the employer keeps a cow for the men and 3s. a week all the year round, this sum being deducted from the wages. The life of a Northern ploughman is a fairly hard one. He begins his work in the fields at 6 a.m., and for a quarter or half an hour before that is engaged in getting his horses ready before starting work; while in the evening he cleans and feeds them, or turns them out, as the case may be, on coming back from work. In the forenoon he stops at 11.30, and gets back to the fields at 2, a long interval, but not longer than is required for the adequate rest of the horses. During the interval in the middle of the day the ploughmen feed their horses on reaching home, but do not as a rule dress them down. Sometimes, however, men who are fond of their horses return to the stable and rub them down after they have had their own dinner.



C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

THE HOMESTEAD.

Copyright

three-quarters of an hour's work with horses when not out at grass, and, in the case of cattle-men, to one hour in summer and four in winter.

A BOOK OF THE WEEK.

IT is always refreshing to come upon a man with a hobby, especially if he be so able and cultured as Mr. R. Bosworth Smith, who, it need scarcely be said, has a very interesting and agreeable pastime. What he has learned about it is embodied in the book just published, *Birdlife and Birdlore* (Murray). The author does not pretend to any scientific knowledge of ornithology, nor to have made any systematic study of birds; but during the whole course of his lifetime he has been much interested in them, their nests and songs, their breeding haunts and habits, and he has amused himself by writing down some of the materials that have been long accumulating in his memory.

The result is a book that is likely to take its place in many a library, as it is written from a vast store of knowledge and from a genuine love of the subject. In looking over it, the tendency for the reader who shares with Mr. Smith a love of his hobby is to try and find out what specially belongs to the writer, that is to say, what has come clearly within the scope of his individual observation, for whoever has made a careful study of bird-books knows well that for many generations they have been copied one from another. It may be said without the slightest fear of contradiction that no ornithologist has known every bird on the list, but has had to depend on the information of others for the greater part of his knowledge. This is where a writer like Mr. Bosworth Smith possesses an advantage. He makes no attempt to go through an exhaustive list, but gossips only about those birds that

have been familiar to him. The book is a veritable storehouse of folklore about birds, for what he has himself seen is supplemented by what he has read, and his skill in linking the one to the other will be evident to anyone reading the following quotation:

"In the little village of Thurstlestone, in South Devon, where owls are common and are carefully protected in both barn and belfry, the rector, the Rev. Frank Coope, an old pupil of my own, was explaining to his Sunday-school children the clauses of the Te Deum, when it occurred to him to ask, 'What



C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

THE RUGGED NORTH.

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These labourers are healthy and stronger men than those of almost any other county in Great Britain, and one reason for this is that, as a rule, they are better fed. The ill-paid East Anglian has to bring up his family to a large extent on slops, but the Northumbrian, though one is sorry to see that porridge and milk figure less in his diet than formerly, has for breakfast tea, and to it his own home-made bread, the butter churned in the cottage of the farm, with the bacon which he has fed, killed, and cured himself. At dinner most commonly

are Cherubim?' The answer promptly came back, 'White owls, sir,' and revealed a belief among his parishioners of which he might otherwise have remained ignorant. 'What are Seraphim, then?' 'Brown owls, sir.' 'What do you mean by, "To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry"?' 'It means that the white owls are always screeching, and the brown owls always hooting before God. The belief is not confined to Thurlstone, or to the present day, for a book of sporting anecdotes published in the last century, and still preserved at Horsmonden Rectory, Kent, contains a chapter entitled 'Cherubim Shooting.' Two cockney sportsmen have succeeded in bringing down a white owl, a bird they had never seen before.

The whole chapter about owls is fascinating, but we are afraid that on some occasions the author credits the bird with more sagacity than is due to it; for example, he tells a story of a brood of brown owls that had been put in a wire cage by a dairyman, and for some time the old birds came and fed them, but one morning they were found all dead in the cage without any external mark of violence. The cottage people held the fantastic belief that they had been poisoned by their parents, who would rather see them dead than in prison. Upon this our author gives voice to the following moralisation:

"If this be so, the deep-seated feeling of which man imagines himself to be the exclusive possessor, that there are things worse even than death, treachery, ingratitude, cowardice, loss of freedom, loss of honour, religious apostasy, the feeling which bade Virginius save his little daughter, by a kindly stab with the butcher's knife, from slavery and shame; the feeling which bade the Numidian king, Massinissa, send as his last present to his beautiful bride, Sophonisba, when she was captured by the Roman Scipio, a cup of poison, with the message that 'she was to see to it that she did nothing unworthy of the daughter of Hasdrubal, and the wife of two Numidian kings,' is not confined to Roman or Numidian, or even to human nature as a whole."

Were this speculation justified it would mean that birds are endowed with passions as complicated as man himself, when he figures in a sensational novel. But why seek an improbable explanation when a very simple one lies to hand? Most people who have ridden about woods have reason to know that the owl is a bird of very delicate constitution, and dead members of the species are picked up quite frequently, so that there might be a hundred good reasons for this small tragedy.

A much more interesting story to our mind is that which is told on the next page, of a wounded owl which was fed by its mate. Not only birds, but four-footed creatures, have been known to do this on many occasions. He gives a striking illustration of the barbarity of our ancestors in his account of the old game for Christmas-time called the duck-hunt. But this he owes to that great collector of birdlore, G. G. Wood. On the whole the favourite bird of Mr. Bosworth Smith seems to be the raven, and he has made an extraordinary collection of the superstitions connected with it, though it is curious to read the following passage in the pages of an educated writer:

"If you wish to hear or overhear the table-talk of these birds of evil omen, go to *The Iwa Corbies*, written by that 'famous poet Anon,' who used so to excite one's boyish curiosity by the mystery that hung over his many and varied poems, and note what has been called its wild vigour and almost fierce sincerity."

It is not often that one hears the most famous of the Border ballads referred to as being by that famous poet Anon, but we notice that among Mr. Bosworth Smith's virtues as a writer an exact knowledge of literature is not to be numbered, since he

misquotes his poetry sadly, even that of Tennyson and Shakespeare, and if the book should go to a second edition, it would need careful reading and revision. Indeed, he is not very careful in his statements of natural history, where, for example, he refers to the cuckoo laying her eggs in the nest of other birds, when, as a matter of fact, she lays the egg at a hedge-root, and carries it in her bill to the place where she finally deposits it. To our mind, the most delightful part of the raven chapter is that in which the author gives the history of his pets. Here is a charming account of the most mischievous of them:

"Did he see the gardener bedding out, with special care, any plant, he would select it for his especial attention as soon as the gardener's back was turned. Did he see a labourer in the allotment 'setting' a row of his beans, as soon as he was gone the raven would follow in his footsteps, dig them up one by one, and drop them one on the top of another into a hole of his own. Did a well-dressed man, something perhaps of a dandy, drop a new lilac kid glove, the raven would be off with it in a moment, dodge all his pursuers, and the moment the pursuit slackened, would begin to pick it to pieces, and would continue his work, each time the pursuers halted for breath, till it was a thing of shreds and tatters. He would follow me about for a walk of a mile or so; and if he happened to meet a dog there was a great show of excitement and fury on both sides; but each had too much regard for his own safety to come to close quarters. It was a case of *corrum canem* quite as much as of *corrum canem*."

Naturally Mr. Bosworth Smith is indignant at the manner and extent to which ravens are destroyed; both in regard to these and to owls he vigorously protests against the use of the pole-trap, apparently not aware that it has already been rendered illegal by Act of Parliament. Again, his impassioned appeal in favour of bird sanctuaries, although perfectly sound, does not seem to take into account that already many are in existence. On some of the deer forests in Scotland, and other highly-preserved lands, the raven, the golden eagle, and other birds are allowed to breed in perfect security. The fifth chapter in the book is a charming account of the old thatched rectory and its birds. His account makes us long for an acquaintance with the house. Near to it is an old tiled barn, of which he writes:

"Parish memories clustered thick around it. It had celebrated, so I used to hear, the 'accession of King George,' probably of all the sorry lot of Georges, with equal and unquestioning loyalty; with better reason the whole parish held high festival in it, 'the young still dancing, while the old surveyed,' at the accession of Queen Victoria, as it has in later times at her successive jubilees, and at the accession of her son. The first missionary meeting, which was ever held in the parish, was held beneath its rafters."

But it had been put to less innocent uses in his time. A story told by Mr. Bosworth Smith illustrates in a wonderfully vivid manner the sort of parson who used to be far from uncommon in our rural districts, and who have now passed completely away, killed, as some think, by the Oxford Movement, which introduced a new seriousness into divine life. The neighbourhood was a favourite one of smugglers, and the following account of them is given:

"'Did you ever,' I asked him one day, in strict confidence, 'cut about or kill any of the Government folk?' 'No,' was the reply; 'but I have helped tie 'em to a post often.' It was the romance of their lives. They



C. H. Hewitt. SPRING-TIME IN THE MEADOWS. Copyright

were not too well off in point of wages; and the archdeacon and parson in one would have had much less perfect sympathy with his archdeaconry and his parishioners than he had, if he had not turned a blind eye to this source of increased income for them. He placed the tithe-barn at their disposal—a queer 'benefit of clergy'—and I have been told that scores of kegs of illicit brandy often lay, in perfect security, beneath innocent-looking heaps of hay or straw, till there was a convenient opportunity for disposing of them otherwise. Sometimes they overflowed even the sanctuary of the tithe-barn, and were stowed in the sanctum sanctorum of the church belfry."

SOME BARNS AND . THEIR STORY.

THE story of buildings that have come down in the world is often interesting and suggestive. Many a dirty tenement in an unfashionable quarter was once



L. E. Beedham. Copyright.
LEPERS' CHAPEL, SOUTH DOOR.

century; the fine semi-circular chancel arch, its shallow buttresses diminishing in stages, the narrow deeply-splayed windows are characteristic features of the architecture of that period. There is some herring-bone masonry on the south and east walls. The alien priories came to an end before the larger convents fell, and it was the pious Henry VI. who gave Isleham to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge. It is, therefore, nearly 500 years since these substantial walls have echoed the orisons of monk or priest. The barn is 80ft. in length and 20ft. in breadth.

a nobleman's mansion, the tumble-down fisherman's shelter on a deserted quay was the Custom House of other days; but especially has the homely barn a chequered past. It may have been a church, a palace, a convent, or anything else, and illustrates history, biography, and tragedy in its changed aspect and uses.

The massive barn at Isleham was long ago the chapel of an alien priory dedicated to St. Margaret, and a cell to the Abbey of St. Jagitto in Brittany. It was built during the latter half of the twelfth



L. E. Beedham. CHAPEL AT WHITTLESFORD. Copyright

Agricultural implements and farm produce occupied it when the photograph was taken. All around Isleham stretches the fenland—Cambridgeshire on one side, Suffolk on the other, a rich corn-growing country divided by dykes, whose steep sides are gay with willow-herb, loosestrife, and meadow-sweet.

Of much the same date, though richer in ornament, is the Lepers' Chapel on the outskirts of Cambridge. This interesting little building was the place of worship attached to a leper hospital of the Middle Ages. Evidently it was not fashioned with the idea that anything would do for the poor unfortunates who were to worship here—far from it. The masons lavished upon door and window arches their favourite chevron moulding, and the same appeared on the chancel arch. They added a string-course of hatched moulding, and another of round billet just below the eaves, they ornamented the windows with jamb-shafts and a star pattern worked on the flat surface of the stone, and so their work has stood for nearly 800 years. Tolls from the great Stourbridge Fair provided the endowment of the

hospital, and after Henry VIII. dissolved the latter these same tolls formed a frequent subject of discussion between representatives of the Town and University of Cambridge. This little building passed through many vicissitudes. It was alternately a storage-place for lumber of the fair, a victualling-house, a drinking-booth, a stable, a barn. As the latter it continued until 1816, when the antiquary Reverend Thomas Kerrick bought it for £160, and presented it to the



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LEPERS' CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE.

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ISLEHAM: WEST END.

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University, to which body it still belongs. It is well cared for and kept in good repair. Halfway over the fens towards Ely, at the dairy farm known as Denney Abbey, there is a fine barn, which at once attracts attention from the remains of tracery in its windows. Rather curiously this also, like Isleham, has a connection with Pembroke College, for both the latter and Denney Abbey were founded by the Countess Mary de Valence, Gray's "Sad Chatillon, on her bridal morn, That wept her bleeding Love," though, by the way, the statement that Mary was maid, wife, and widow on one day is incorrect. Her husband, Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, lived for many years after his marriage before he perished by a violent death in France, and it was after the Countess became a widow that she devoted her wealth to pious purposes. The barn was the refectory of the Minors of Saint Clare, who occupied Denney Abbey for about 200 years. They were expelled by Henry VIII., and the property subsequently passed through many hands; Thomas Hobson, the noted carrier, held it at one time. The barn dates from 1348, and is 93ft. long and 22ft. wide. When the photograph was taken a happy family of calves were fattening where once the nuns ate their frugal meals. Whittlesford is a village with traditions of departed greatness;

The decorated mouldings of the window and piscina on the south side are graceful, and on the north there are



L. E. Beedham.

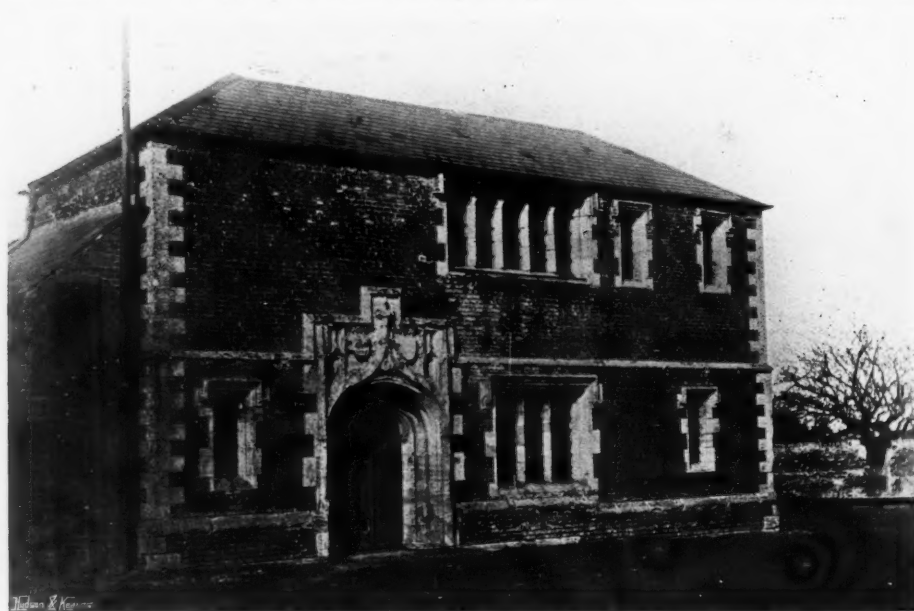
DENNEY ABBEY: THE OLD REFECTORY.

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three narrow windows with square heads and some slight ornamental mouldings.

The farmhouse called The Tower at Little Downham, in the Isle of Ely, has episcopal associations, for it was one of the ten residences which in the fourteenth century appertained to the Bishopric of Ely. Bishop Matthew Wren, after his first short imprisonment in the Tower of London, retired here with his wife and family, and it was at this quiet spot in the fens that he was again arrested and committed for eighteen long years to close confinement in the Tower.

The expense of keeping up so many residences was considerable, and early in the eighteenth century Downham Palace had fallen into such a ruinous condition that Bishop Symon Patrick obtained leave to dispose of it, and so free himself and his successors from responsibility for dilapidations. A farmstead occupies the site of the palace, and the principal remaining part of the original building is now a barn, ornamented with the arms of Bishop Alcock and of the See of Ely.



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PART OF THE PALACE, DOWNHAM.

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THE EGERTON STUD.

THERE are some envious folk who attribute the full measure of success achieved in his profession by Richard Marsh to the persistent good luck which, according to them, has followed him throughout his career. But such as these are wrong; for the position held by the master of Egerton House has been attained by a thorough knowledge of every branch of his calling, unimpeachable integrity, and an infinite capacity for hard work, in addition to which, his innate courtesy and generous disposition have secured for him the esteem and respect of all with whom he comes in contact. The responsibilities of superintending the training of some seventy odd horses are in themselves a burden sufficiently heavy for most people; but to these must now be added the cares of an important and rapidly-increasing stud.



W. A. Rouch.

AYRSHIRE.

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The same attention to details and methodical organisation of daily work which have enabled the work of the great training stables at Egerton House to be so successfully carried on are noticeable in all the arrangements connected with the stud, which is not a little benefited by the supervision of a very able, hard-working, and conscientious stud-groom in the person of A. Smallwood, under whose charge are the five stallions, Common, Cyllene, Ayshire, St. Serf, and Ugly, together with a number of first-class mares, amongst which the names of Sceptre, Memoir,

Quintessence, Laodamia, and Gas are prominent. Taking the Egerton Stud sires in alphabetical order, Ayshire comes first on the list, and right gallantly does the brave old horse carry the twenty years which have elapsed since his foalhood days. Time has not faded the high courage of his



W. A. Rouch.

CYLLENE.

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UGLY.

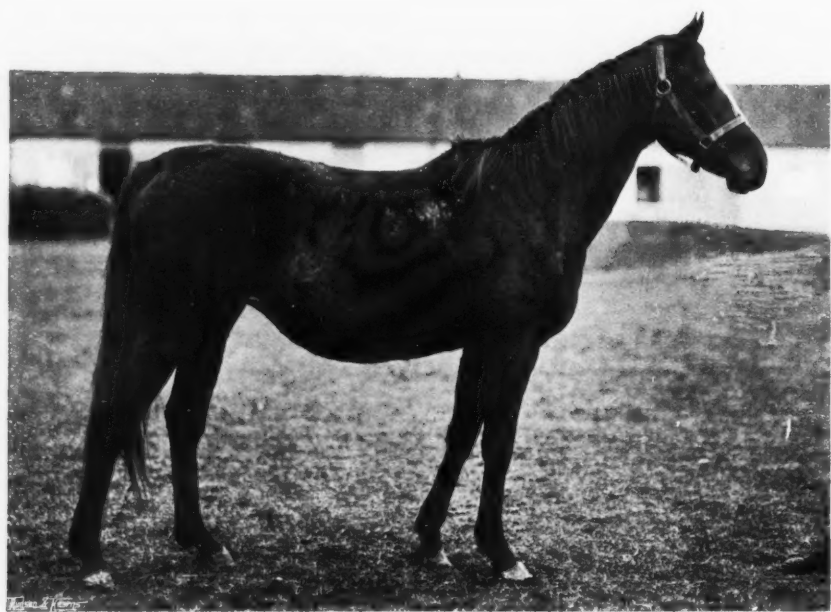
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COMMON.

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MANTLE, CH. MARE BY BEND OR.

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youth, an exhibition of which when a yearling came very nigh to cutting short his splendid career before it had well begun. He was always a horse of sound constitution and fairly good temper, but was prompt to resent any treatment of which he did not approve; and one day, when he was in the breaking tackle, with a lad on his back and a man on each side to lead him, something upset his equanimity, and like a flash he whipped round and round, lashing the two men together with the cavesson reins. The situation was somewhat serious, but fortunately there was plenty of assistance at hand, and no great harm was done. Ayrshire is out of Atalanta, is one of the three Derby winners sired by Hampton, and was bred by the Duke of Portland; and with his birth in 1885 may be said to have commenced the extraordinary run of luck which clung to the "white, black sleeves and cap" from 1887 to 1894. He was a rather backward colt, and was not tried till about the end of May, when he just failed to give 21lb. to a useful filly called Maiden Belle, who belonged to Lord Hastings. As a two year old he won the Chesterfield Stakes at Newmarket, the Prince of Wales's Stakes at Goodwood, and the Champagne Stakes at Newmarket; the latter of these races was certainly the best of his two year old performances, for he won easily by two lengths, defeating Caerlaverock, who had finished in front of him in the Whitsuntide Plate at Manchester, and such smart horses as Crowberry and Van Dieman's Land; but, unluckily, he hit his leg during the race, and was thereby prevented from running in the Middle Park Plate. That Ayrshire was a good horse there is no doubt; but there is no getting away from the extraordinary good luck which enabled him to win the Two Thousand Guineas and the Derby in the following year. For the Guineas he started at 8 to 1, and had apparently no chance of defeating the hitherto unbeaten Friar's Balsam; but owing to an unsuspected abscess in the mouth the crack could never take hold of his bridle, and made no show at all in the race, which Ayrshire won easily enough, and followed up this victory by an easy win in the Epsom Derby; but—and here is where he was again favoured by fortune—only a few days after the race he threw out a splint, which prevented him from fulfilling any of his Ascot engagements. He ran badly in the St. Leger—won by Seabreeze—although he was backed as if he was expected to run very differently. Personally, I never considered Ayrshire to be a thorough stayer in good company, and am inclined for several reasons to the belief that a mile was really his best distance. As a four year old he won the Kempton Park Royal Stakes of 10,000 sovs., in which he beat Seabreeze, who was already showing signs that the brilliancy of her form was on the decline, of which still further proof was forthcoming in the Eclipse Stakes, in which she was completely out of the hunt, and left Ayrshire to win by a length or two from El Dorado. That was his last victory, for he broke down in the autumn during the race for the Champion Stakes, and never carried silk again. With regard to Atalanta, the dam of Ayrshire, the following extract from a letter written by the late Lord Rosslyn in 1884 should be of interest to breeders of bloodstock; his lordship says: "Many of my mares have never been trained, and yet have bred good winners, and I incline rather to a fresh young mare than to a broken-down racer as a brood mare, even though the latter may have been successful on the Turf. But to be true to my text I must avoid theories; Feronia, by Thormanby out of Woodbine, by Stockwell out of Sister to Newminster, is a mare I take for a chance example out of my stud. She has bred Syrinx, Seringa, Macaria, Atalanta, Camilla, and Kelpie to Le Maréchal, Macaroni, Galopin, and Blair Athol. She was

never trained. Her produce are all winners. Syrinx broke her leg, or might have won the Oaks. Atalanta was paralysed as a foal, or would have been quite first-class. I could multiply this example by many others, but my letter is already too long."

At the stud Ayrshire has been eminently successful, and, in fact, may not inaptly be termed the best all-round sire of the day. During the last four years his stock have won over 52,000 sovs. in stakes, and last year he was represented by some twenty winners,

at Ascot, which he won as he liked, beating Barbatello, his solitary opponent, quite at his leisure. The race for the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown brought about the downfall of Common, both Surefoot and Gouverneur finishing in front of him; but it is only fair to say that both the course and the manner in which the race was run were totally unsuitable to him—they only raced for about five furlongs, and he was beaten for speed. The race for the St. Leger served to show the pluck and staying

qualities which Common undoubtedly possessed, for although hard ridden in the last half mile, he drew out, and won quite easily by a good length. Immediately after the race he passed into the possession of Sir J. Blundell Maple, who decided to send him at once to the stud, although in the opinion of his trainer, John Porter, he was perfectly sound and likely to develop into a really great "Cup" horse. Hitherto Common has not been a pronounced success as a sire; several of his stock have run fairly well in France, and amongst those which he has sired in this country are Nun Nicer, Osleach, and Newsboy.

Having concluded our examination of the two winners of the Derby, we turn to Cyllene, who, had he figured amongst the entries, would certainly have won that race in 1898 when Jeddah, trained by Marsh, won it for Mr. Larnach. That Cyllene was quite a first-class race-horse admits of no doubt; in fact, it is somewhat difficult to estimate how good he really was, and the writer will never forget the astounding display of speed he gave in the National Produce Stakes at Sandown Park. If ever S. Loates rode a bad race in his life, he did on that

occasion, and when he finally did extricate himself from difficulties entirely of his own making, and asked the colt to go on and win his race, it seemed utterly impossible that any horse could make up the ground in time. It was done, however, and Cyllene won by a head, which should have been lengths instead. Three other important races were placed to his credit as a two year old. As a three year old he won the Sandown Foal Stakes of 2,000 sovs., the Jockey Club Stakes



W. A. Rouch.

GAS, DAM OF CICERO.

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who between them accounted for forty-five races. He is the sire of Our Lassie and Airs and Graces, both of whom were Oaks winners, and Airs and Graces is now the dam of Jardy, who appears likely to win both the Two Thousand Guineas and the Derby in this year of grace. Many other good horses owe their paternity to Ayrshire, who is a bay horse, standing 16h., with a girth of 6ft. 4in., and 8½in. of bone below the knee. His chief characteristics are great quality, strong and well-placed shoulders, good loins and quarters, and general symmetry of proportion. When the late Lord Alington made up his mind to sell he was no stickler for price, and on one occasion he offered to sell the mare Thistle, covered by Petrarch, together with her two year old son Common and the yearling Goldfinch, for about £700. The offer was not accepted, fortunately for him, for Common won the triple crown of the Two Thousand Guineas, Derby, and St. Leger. Goldfinch became a big winner as a two year old, and was sold for £3,000. The unborn filly, which the mare was carrying, became known as Throstle, the winner of the St. Leger, and finally Common himself was sold to the late Sir J. Blundell Maple for £15,000. Common is a whole-coloured brown horse, foaled in 1888, by Isonomy out of Thistle. He stands just 16h. 1in., has 8½in. of bone below the knee, and girths rather over 6ft. 7in. He is an animal of great power and substance, with wonderful loins and quarters, good stifles, and capital shoulders, with a remarkably well-placed humerus. To a critical eye his joints are, perhaps, none of the best, as far as looks go; but there is no getting away from the fact that they stood the stress and strain of the severe training which a heavy horse like Common had to undergo in the preparation for the classic races which he won so easily. As a two year old he was such a big, awkward, and unfurnished youngster that no attempt was made to train him for his juvenile engagements, and his first appearance in public was for the Two Thousand Guineas. In desperately heavy going and in a drenching storm of rain, Common won the Derby by two lengths from the French horse Gouverneur. Forty to one was laid on him for the St. James's Palace Stakes



W. A. Rouch.

SCEPTRE.

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of 10,000 sovs. at Newmarket, in which Velasquez was amongst the beaten lot, and the Newmarket Stakes of 3,655 sovs., in which he met and beat Jeddah, the winner of the Derby. The following year he set the seal on his fame as a four year old by winning the much-coveted Gold Cup at Ascot, and was retired to the stud, where there seemed at first to be some inclination on the part of breeders to neglect this beautifully-bred son of Bona Vista and Arcadia; but

the brilliant performances of Lord Rosebery's Cicero and the form shown by Polymelus and others have already made his reputation as a sire. Nothing succeeds like success, and the quality of the mares now sent to him, amongst which is Sceptre, will, in all likelihood, ensure his being placed at the head of the winning sires before long. He is a beautiful chestnut horse of great quality, with splendidly placed shoulders, and a singular resemblance to his grandsire, Bend Or, in the smooth, well-turned lines of his back and quarters. He is well let down, and is of a good temper and tranquil disposition. The result of his alliance with the famous Sceptre will be awaited with interest, and I append the pedigree of the hoped-for produce of this brilliant mare. The prejudice which exists against first foals is to a considerable extent confirmed by statistics, and in the case of Sceptre it must also be taken into consideration that she may require both time and rest before her constitution has entirely recovered from the effects of her racing career.

(16) PRODUCE, 1906	CYLLENE 9	Bona Vista (4)	{	Bend Or (1)	{	Doncaster (5)	
				Vista		Rouge Rose	
		Arcadia		Isonomy 19		Macaroni 14	
				Distant Shore		Verdure	
	SCEPTRE 16	Persimmon 7	{	St. Simon 11	{	Sterling 12	
				Perdita II.		Isola Bella	
		Ornament		Bend Or (1)		Hermite (5)	
				Lily Agnes		Land's End	
						Galopin 3	
						St. Angela	

Then comes St. Serf (1887), by St. Simon out of Feronia. He was bred by the Duke of Portland, and is a great upstanding



W. A. Rouch.

QUINTESSENCE AND FOAL BY ORION.

(First foal, a week old.)

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specimen of the thorough-bred, standing rather over 16h. 3in., with 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. of bone below the knee, and measuring 6ft. 8in. in girth. He has been fairly successful as a sire, his stock having won a total of rather more than 24,000 sovs. during the last four seasons. He is a bit plain about the shoulders, and rather coarse about the hocks, but his back and loins are good, and it is much in his favour that he comes of a sire family (8), and that there is plenty of both sire and running blood in his pedigree.

Last of the Egerton Stud sires is Ugly, who, by the way, is really a very good-looking animal. Foaled in 1892, this son of Minting and Wee Agnes was not long in developing the power and muscle which are almost invariably the characteristics of very speedy horses. He was also exceptionally sound, and in the course of the seven years during which he remained in training he took part in forty-seven races, out of which he was returned the winner on twenty-two occasions. He is a well-bred horse, and is not likely to remain long at his present moderate fee of 10 guineas. It is, perhaps, superfluous to remark that these horses all look well, for Egerton House has long been famous for the polish and well-turned-out appearance of its

representatives; but their actual state of health and well-being is all that could be desired, and they get plenty of that exercise which is so essential to the well-being of a stallion.

Amongst the mares in the paddocks, Sceptre is, of course, pre-eminent, and the flying daughter of Persimmon and Ornament appears to have settled down quite naturally to the peaceful existence of a stud matron. Her performances on the Turf are fresh in the memories of most people, as are the facts that she was bought as a yearling for 10,000 guineas by Mr. Sievier at the sale of the late Duke of Westminster's bloodstock, and resold by him to Mr. W. Bass for 25,000 guineas. Perhaps the most brilliant of all her performances was when she beat Rock Sand by four lengths for the Jockey Club Stakes. Gas, by Ayrshire out of Illuminata, the dam of Cicero, has naturally gone once more on a visit to Cyllene; she is a nice stamp of mare, and is also the dam of Valve and Gascony. Quintessence, who is owned by Lord Falmouth, is a strong, thick-set little mare, with splendidly placed shoulders and wide, strong quarters, has a foal by Orion, and has also gone to



W. A. Rouch.

ST. SERF.

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Cyllene, to whom many other good mares are booked. Ella Tweed, a winner of the Brocklesby Stakes, is amongst the mares going to St. Serf. Miss Gunning is visiting Ayrshire, as are Autumn Rose, Mazeppa, Barndoor, and Yours. Mr. T.

Cannon is sending Chrysomel and Microscope to Common, and on a visit to Ugly are Mr. Cooper Smith's Granny, Mr. Stirk's Tertia, Mr. Fernandez's Alameda, and Mr. Holmes's Chasse Café.

A DAY WITH FERRETTERS.

IT is the autumn and winter months that see the farmer in the North of England busy, as is his wont, with the task (or recreation) of what is called "putting down the rabbits." Up to now they have had a good time, being unmolested during seedtime and harvest, spring and summer. Farm-work also, at the former seasons, being somewhat on the ebb, there is ample time for the waging of an incessant war on the ground game, many thousands being sold in our market towns, which in some degree (but never wholly) recoups the farmer for the injury done to his crops. It is customary for husbandmen, now and again, to join each other in a day's ferreting, and the following may give the reader some idea of such a day in that part of the "North Countree" covered by the great County of York, the old territory of our forefathers the Brigantes. At this season the leaves are off the hedgerows, and, as Tennyson says:

"There's not a flower on all the hills,
The frost is on the pane."

The voice of the skylark is hushed, and the birds have ceased to twitter on the trees; the only sounds which break the quiet of the country-side are, perhaps, the distant hum of the steam thrasher, which is now busy in the farmyards, the crowing of Mr. Chanticleer, or the "chack! chack!" of the fieldfare. The deficiency of cover to hide these destructive rodents is now everywhere evident, and this is decidedly so much to the gunner's advantage. Of course, we do not go ferreting on any kind of day, some attention being paid to the condition of the ground; for instance, we would not think of going ferreting when there was a frost as hard as the heart of a Memel log (as Dirk Hatteraick says somewhere in "Guy Mannering"); we must be able to dig.

Taking two ferrets (one much larger than the other) and other necessities, we arrived, one dull morning, at our first burrow. This consisted of several holes, and had been recently worked (that is, enlarged by the rabbits), as was evidenced by the quantity of new soil near; and, further, this soil was firm



C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

AN INTERRUPTED MEAL.

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and compact, indicating the frequent passing to and fro of our quarry. We give these details, as some people imagine the ferret is indiscriminately put into every hole we see; but, as a matter of fact, a certain amount of judgment has to be used. Further, it is absolutely necessary that perfect silence should be kept. The necessity for this has, perhaps, the effect of debarring the opposite sex from this sport. Be this as it may, if strict silence is not maintained, the timid little creatures will not bolt. The little ferret was now put into the hole, and we walked back ten or fifteen paces, taking particular care to remove spades, bags, etc., from the mouths of the burrows. Anything fresh about the hole "brer rabbit" notices instantly, and defers his exit, or, perhaps, does not make it at all. We must be (and are) on the alert immediately the ferret enters the burrow. A rumble was heard, and out came one full tilt, which was duly "doubled up," as we say, that is, received a sufficient quantity of lead to arrest its further progress. Another made his exit immediately after, and ran in again about three yards distant from where it came out. This frequently happens, and it requires a clever marksman to shoot them when skipping out and in in this manner. A few minutes later the ferret put his head out of the hole, looking around, as if to ask, Did you see anything? We caught him up, and he was put in where the rabbit had disappeared. Presently, a shrill squeaking was heard, and on digging in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, we were rewarded by unearthing a

rabbit (almost dead, severely worried and very bloody behind the head), and the ferret, the latter having his teeth fixed in his prey; both were dragged out together. We had to "choke the ferret off," as it is called, that is, press his throat to such an extent that he was compelled to open his mouth, and so relinquish his booty. As we have seen a dog snatched by the hind legs from the strife with a fallen rival, as we have seen one half passive and defenceless, while the other half, head, teeth, eyes, claws, seems engulfed in the mangled and prostrate enemy, so it was with this ferret and his prey.

At this time we were at an altitude of nearly 1,000ft. above sea-level, and had, as a consequence, an extensive and beautiful view of a great part of Yorkshire. A picturesque valley spread itself at our feet, while in the distance could be seen hill behind hill, stretching to the horizon, some twenty miles to westward, where lay the Cumberland Lakes.

Our carrier (the lad we had to carry the rabbits, etc.) now gathered up his paraphernalia, and we started for another



W. Cadby.

PUTTING THE FERRET IN.

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W. Cadby.

CHOKING HIM OFF.

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burrow, situate in an open field, about 200yds. from a dense wood of black firs. Here a hedge had once stood, but it had now disappeared (saving an old thorn stump here and there), and only the mound ("cam," we call it) remained to indicate its former position. This mound was almost destitute of herbage. The conies had burrowed into it, and, of course, in our ferret went like a sleuth-hound. We stood off again, and remained standing for about 10min., but nothing appeared except a huge rat, which we had great pleasure in despatching. Shortly afterwards we went up to the holes to listen, that is, to kneel on the ground (of course, we are not in our Sunday best), and place our heads to the hole; in this way we attempted to locate the ferret. Nothing could be heard, so we put our ears to several points around the burrow, but all was still, not a sound audible. Putting in the large ferret, we continued listening, our guns, at half cock, having now been placed on the cam. We determined now to have a smoke and consider the matter. While busy filling our pipes, a rabbit came out about ten paces from us, and scampered to the wood, and though our dog did his utmost to intercept him, "brer rabbit" reached his "brier patch" many yards in advance.

Shortly after this both ferrets appeared, one with his fore claws full of down, indicating he had been at close quarters, but that his intended victim had escaped. It was just at this moment that rather an odd incident occurred. A prolonged squealing was heard, and looking up we espied a rabbit hopping slowly over a hill on our left. Why it made all the fuss we were at a loss to determine. It ran a short distance and then squatted, that is, sat down, and, strange to say, our carrier went and picked it up. It was alive, and absolutely unharmed. All was explained when, about 3sec. afterwards, a weasel in full pursuit came over the hill. Of course we bagged him as well.

We now set off for our third burrow, which was a hedge possessing a cam perfectly honey-



W. Cadby.

A LURE FOR THE FERRET.

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combed with holes for hundreds of yards, and where, as we well knew, the ferret might be put in, and he would probably appear again about fifty or a hundred paces from us. It was quite a subterranean maze, and we only ferret it on special occasions. The ferrets, however, being in excellent condition for this labyrinth, we determined to try it, and immediately on their entrance we could hear its inhabitants rushing hither and thither. Occasionally could be heard a squeal, and in less than a minute out came one at full speed. Bang! On this occasion, to a certain extent, it was a miss, for the rabbit, still running, though sorely wounded, succeeded in reaching a hole further up the fence, nor had our dog any opportunity of forestalling it.

During this period, however, we have to record the fact that two were shot at the other side of the fence, but no ferret had as yet appeared. We waited some little time, and then determined to listen, taking care to have our guns in readiness. Nothing could be heard, but a rabbit, appearing about 50yds. ahead, led us to conclude the ferret was not far away, and our inference proved correct, for after standing about 5min. at that spot we shot four rabbits. Later on the ferrets appeared, and going further down the fence we succeeded in bolting six others, four of which were bagged. Subsequently we had to put in our large ferret to locate the other, and after some lapse of time we left this burrow, having a total bag of twelve up to this hour, viz,



W. Cadby.

EAGER FOR THE FRAY.

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noon. As we were on the point of leaving this burrow we shot a golden plover which was flying over our heads along with two others. It is rather a rare bird hereabouts and very shy.

It would be mere repetition, tedious and uninteresting, to enumerate all the little details connected with the day's sport; but we ought perhaps to record one other fact, and that is, we lost our little ferret. We hasten to say, in our own justification, that this can happen to the most experienced veterans in this sport. For hours we tried to locate him, but could not do so, nor would the little wretch leave the burrow. Darkness coming on with a slight shower of snow, it was determined to leave him in the hole overnight. As is usual with us in such cases, we blocked all the holes but one



R. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

THE MORNING'S BAG.

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and in this one left the ferret-box, confident we should find him on it on the morrow. In this we were not mistaken, for on going early, he was coiled up in the straw of the box, and, on our peering in, he raised his pink eyes, blinking in the morning light, and appeared rather annoyed at being so early disturbed. We will only add that our total bag for the day, including the weasel and golden plover, was thirty-one.

IN THE GARDEN.

TULIPS THAT REFUSE TO FLOWER.

WE are perplexed and, needless to say, disappointed with the May-flowering Tulips. We made a large planting last autumn, in the full hope of an exceptionally fine display next month; the bulbs were large, well-ripened, and absolutely free from disease, but the majority have thrown quite blind stems. There is ample leaf, but no flower. It would be interesting to have the opinion of Tulip-growers on this point. After a wet and sunless year we may expect a failure; but 1904 was exceptionally warm and dry, and in every way an ideal year for bulbs of most kinds. The May Tulips, which include the Gesners and Darwin forms, are the chief delights of the many, and a wholesale failure is regrettable.

TOMATOES OUT OF DOORS.

The culture of Tomatoes outdoors must always be regarded as more or less speculative, because climatic conditions make all the difference between success and failure. The Tomato is essentially sun-loving, and in bright, warm summers it well repays the trouble expended upon its culture outdoors. The Tomato, however, is so generally popular as an article of food that hundreds of people who have no glass accommodation willingly take the risks of the weather and grow their plants in the open. There are several important points, however, bearing on the success of outdoor Tomato culture, and if more attention were paid to these failures would not be so numerous, even in indifferent seasons. In the first place, it should be remembered that the season of the Tomato at its best is a short one, and if the plants suffer a check at the outset they are at a disadvantage throughout. Both purchasers and raisers of Tomatoes should see that they get plants which have been grown steadily from the seedling stage, and are furnished with strong fleshy stems. If these plants are not over-root-bound, and are growing steadily when put out, they suffer no check, and are not very long before they begin to show flower trusses. In short, there can be no doubt that half the success of outdoor Tomato culture is due to a good start. The second point is that of growing the plants in a favourable position. Of all places there is none equal to a warm south wall, as the heat conserved by the masonry is helpful to the plants. If a favourable wall cannot be provided, then an open sunny position outdoors should be selected, and the plants be trained to strong stakes and confined to single stems. The Tomato does not need heavy feeding during the early stages of growth, and heavy applications of manure to the soil at planting-time are conducive to rank stems and huge leaves. The time to feed Tomatoes is when the plants are undergoing the strain of cropping, and then the fruit takes up the nutriment provided. There is no better way of growing Tomatoes in the open than on single stems, and this is done by pinching back the lateral growth as they appear. If no pinching

is done, the plants become mere thickets of growth, and the fruits which are produced are prevented from ripening owing to the exclusion of air. Most varieties of Tomatoes may be grown in the open in favourable seasons, but some are better adapted for this method of culture than others. Though it is not the handsomest of fruits, we still favour Laxton's Open Air as a serviceable variety for outdoors, and Sutton's Earliest of All is also good.

RANDOM NOTES.

Work to be Done.—Prune Evergreen shrubs and sow seeds of Forget-me-Nots, Primroses, Polyanthus, and Wallflowers to provide plants for putting out in the coming autumn. Raspberries will now be throwing up strong canes, which must be thinned out, retaining only the strongest. Remove suckers springing up in the rows of old plants, and top-dress with well-decayed manure. Continue to thin out annual flowers, and trim in Box edges with the shears where this work is necessary. Plank spaces often occur, especially when the edging is old. Now is the season to make good these defects. Keep the hoe busy amongst garden crops, and do not spare water when the weather is very dry.

Crown Imperials in the Grass.—We made last year an interesting experiment which is happily bringing forth an abundant return at the time of writing. In February of last year a quantity of Crown Imperials were planted in grass land, the soil light, rather dry, and with gravel close to the surface. In the following spring, of course, the growth was weakly, but a few flowers appeared, which were promptly removed to concentrate the plant's energies into growth for another year. Now the clumps are in full flower, and the effect of the strong leafy flower-crowned stems in the grass is not unpleasant. The flowers of the Crown Imperial (or *Fritillaria imperialis*), as it is called in books, have great variety of colouring. Some are a pure self yellow, others of a bronzy shade, and a few quite a reddish brown. We dislike them near to the house, as the shoots when spearing through the soil in spring have a strong and objectionable odour.

Quality in Vegetables.—That beautiful monthly publication, *Flora and Sylva*, opens this month with an important article upon the evil of growing vegetables to an abnormal size and of cooking them badly. This is a perennial question in horticultural journals, but it is only by constant allusion to it that reform is possible. The editor, Mr. Robinson, urges all to "work against the spoiling of some vegetables through the misguided effort for size. Although the flavour of vegetables may be less marked than that of fruit, it is often their essential quality. A change in size, by adding to the watery and fibrous tissue of a plant, may spoil the flavour, as has been done in the case of the Brussels Sprout, which is no longer the same little rosette of green,



C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.

A "CAM."

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but a coarse Cabbage Sprout. For some years there has been in our markets a very large French Bean, without any of the quality of the small kinds, though its huge pod makes it popular with the market gardener, whereas the French Bean ought to be a delicate vegetable, the value of which should depend entirely upon its flavour. The cooking of vegetables to form dishes for their own sakes—as is done in France and other countries—might also be encouraged. If fruits, cereals, and roots are worth this care, far more should be the fresh green vegetables which our moist climate enables to thrive longer without artificial watering than, perhaps, any other. Among the vegetables which are treated in this way by the French cook are Cardoons, Celery, Celeriac, the Artichoke (both true and false), Kidney Beans, Indian Corn, Marrows, and other Gourds, Egg Plant, Batavian Endive, etc. The methods of steaming and braising which preserve the natural juices of vegetables, instead of throwing them into (often) hard water, makes this all the more desirable, and, indeed, necessary, if we are to enjoy the full benefit of the many excellent vegetables now within our reach."



CHICHELEY HALL, the fine old Buckinghamshire manor house which we depict, may be traced back to a race of those prosperous traders and merchants who rose to such prominence, replacing to a large extent the old nobility, in the Tudor age. The house stands near the northern extremity of the shire, some three miles from the old town of Newport Pagnell, and the property belonged to Tickford Priory, founded by Ralph Paganell, or Pagnell, as a cell of Marmoutier, until the Dissolution, when it was purchased from the Crown by Anthony Cave, whose father, Richard Cave of Stanford, was greatly advanced owing to his intimate friendship with Cromwell, the vicar-general, but died before he could share in the great spoliation. Anthony was bred to the trade of a merchant of the Staple of Calais, but, desiring to reside in England, Cromwell procured him the lease of Tickford Abbey, Bucks, in 1546. Partly through this association with his father's friend he grew very rich, and chiefly invested his wealth in lands in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire. He is described on his memorial brass in Chicheley Church as a former merchant of the Staple of Calais, and "Dominus" of Chicheley. This old merchant and landowner was the builder of the original Chicheley Hall, and some parts of his ancient structure, erected about the year 1550, are incorporated in the present edifice, which was built by Sir Anthony Chester at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Anthony Cave's association with the existing house

may be found in some of the old features retained, and in particular in a room panelled with early oak, where is a beam on which may be read the moral injunction playing upon his name: "Cave ne Deum offendas; Cave ne proximum lædas; Cave ne tua negligentia familiam deseras; 1550."

Anthony Cave died in 1558, and his estate at Chicheley passed with his eldest daughter and co-heiress, Judith, to her husband, who was also her cousin, William Chester, citizen and draper of London, eldest son of Sir William Chester, M.P., Lord Mayor of London, a munificent merchant of the City, who loved learning and was concerned in the founding and endowment of Christ's Hospital and St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The son of William and Judith Chester, named Anthony after his maternal grandfather, succeeded to the estates on the death of the widow of the latter in 1577. He was a prominent man in his day, who took an active part in local affairs, raised a troop of horse in 1588, was sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1602-3, and was created a baronet in 1620. He was succeeded by his son Sir Anthony, the second baronet, who, having married the daughter of Sir John Peyton of Doddington, without his father's consent, was partially disinherited. He was in some pecuniary difficulty, but is remembered as a valiant Cavalier, who commanded a troop of horse at Naseby. His conspicuous loyalty in those troublous times drew down upon himself and his estates the vengeance of the Parliament, and in 1645 the garrison of Newport Pagnell sacked and plundered Chicheley Hall, of



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"COUNTRY LIFE."



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SOUTH-EAST CORNER.

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which the rents were sequestered. In these misfortunes Sir Anthony Chester was overwhelmed, and, in peril of his life or liberty, fled to Holland, having transferred a great part of his estate to his "good brother" Henry. A letter still remains in which, on the eve of his departure, he besought this brother to be "as a husband to my wife, and a father to my children." Henry, like the good brother he was, had a nominal possession only, but the Cavalier, returning to England in 1650, broken alike in fortune and health, found his house wasted and in ruins. He died in the following year, and two portraits now at the hall are attributed to the gallant but unfortunate gentleman and his wife. The lady survived her husband for forty years, and died at Chicheley in 1692, in her 89th year.

Sir Anthony, third of the name, one of their thirteen children, succeeded to the shattered estate on his father's death in 1651, but on the death of his uncle, Sir Henry Chester, K.B., in 1669, his fortunes changed, and his son Sir John, who succeeded him in 1698, was able to rebuild the house, which he did at great cost between the years 1699 and 1704. His figure, as a blue-eyed, fair-haired boy of twelve or thirteen, with his brother Anthony, is to be seen in a painting at Chicheley Hall. While he was still under age he married Anne, daughter of William Wollaston, and the lady having a fortune of £10,000, with more in prospect, the fortunes of the Chesters were repaired. He rebuilt the old house, therefore, with little regard to expense, in the style of architecture favoured in his time. It is a great mass of red brick, with stone facings, and a flat roof, very characteristic and imposing, with a certain calm dignity in



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EAST FRONT.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

its features. The south frontage is divided into three compartments, that in the centre being curiously raised above the others, and the wall surface has fluted Corinthian pilasters at intervals, while the door and windows are good but plain, the most ornate feature being a cornice over the second storey windows sculptured with masks and cornucopias. The east and west fronts are in similar style, but plainer, and on the south-west is a range of quaint old stables, while the embattled tower of the church rises

amid the trees close at hand. The pile of buildings is certainly very striking in character, but there are designs in existence which show that the house itself was to have been more lavishly adorned, with statuary upon the parapet.

The interior is both beautiful and interesting. Entering, we find the hall very noble and imposing, with exquisite marbles and glorious panelling. There are two Corinthian arcades, through one of which the great staircase is reached, a magnificent example of woodwork, inlaid with cedar and mahogany. The panelling has a cornice of the key pattern carved in wood, over which the balustered gallery has a fine effect. Beautiful portraits, excellent old furniture, many choice art works and rich carpets and rugs are the features of the hall; and lovely panelling, moulded and inlaid, fine chimney-pieces of marble, pilasters and carvings worthy of Grinling Gibbons, give rare distinction to other parts of the interior.

Ascending the noble staircase we reach the library, which is at the top of the house, and is, perhaps, the most interesting of the apartments. It has a certain kinship with the Vatican library, in that the books are concealed. The walls are panelled



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GARDEN AND LAUNDRY.

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THE HALL GALLERY.

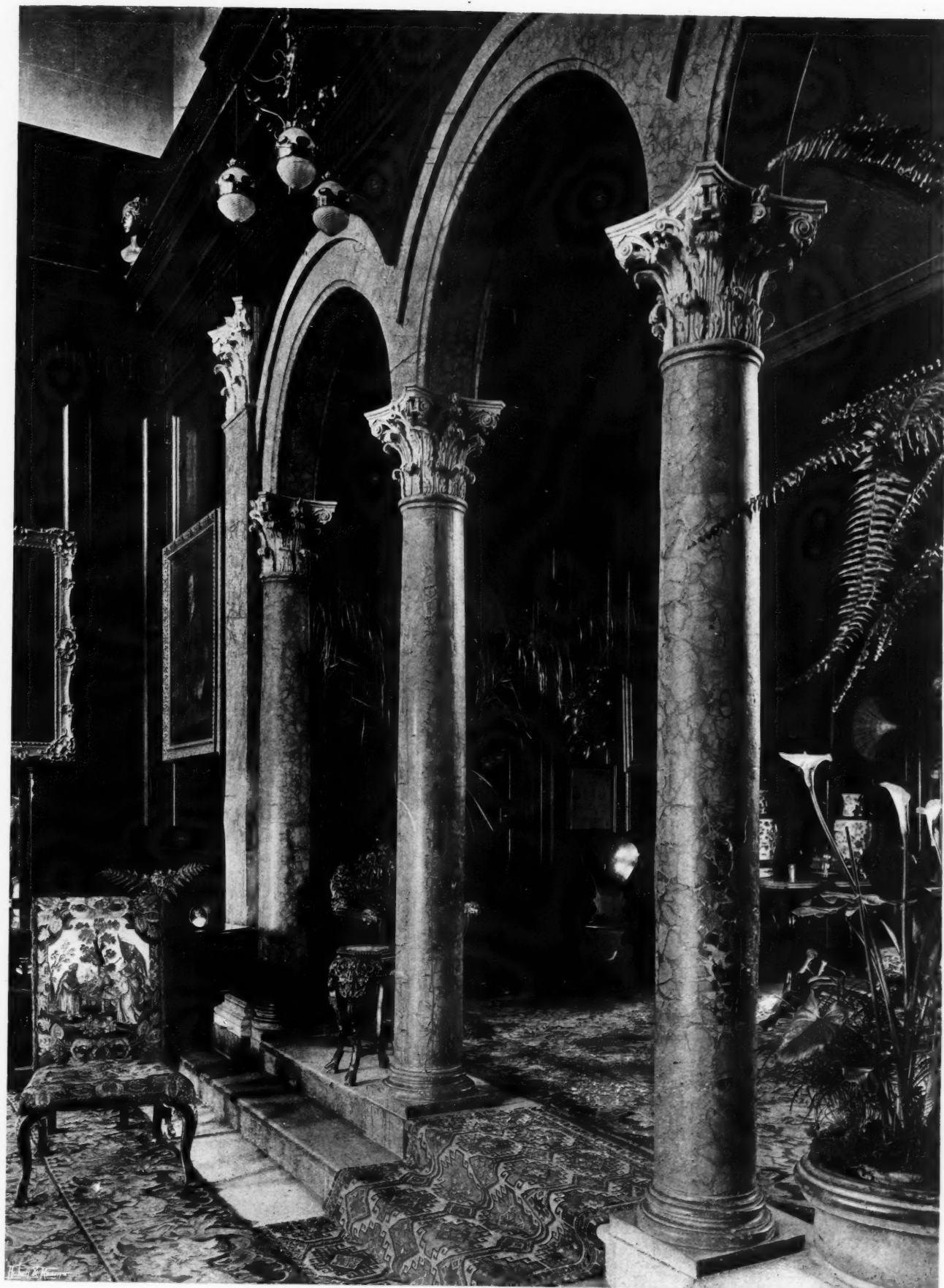
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CORRIDORS OF HALL.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



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STEPS IN HALL.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

with oak, the large spaces being divided by fluted pilasters, which open with a curious key, and disclose the volumes on the shelves, with two tiers of drawers below. The materials of the old house were freely used in the new structure, as in the oak-panelled room already alluded to, which has the punning inscription of Anthony Cave. This panelling had been painted many a time, but the pigment was carefully removed in 1872 and the inscription disclosed. Part of the old staircase of oak probably

came from the ancient structure, and has some curious features. A massive wooden chimney-piece of later date is also noticeable, being adorned with the shield of Chester and Cave, quarterly, carved in oak, with figures of soldiers, with swords and halberds, painted in oils on either side.

Sir John Chester did not confine his improvements to the house, for he employed a landscape gardener, and a lake was formed in the park in 1699, and a boat-house added in the



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EAST FRONT OF STABLES.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

following year. He also laid out a new walled garden, and made new approaches with avenues of elms, besides planting thousands of other trees. Later possessors have been planters also, and the effect is seen in the fine trees which now give such distinction to the place. The work of building and planting was in progress during many years, the main structure being completed about 1701, and the cost was enormous. Mr. R. E. Chester Waters, who has written a fine genealogy of the Chesters

of Chicheley, says, indeed, that it was always believed in the family that for less than the money spent Sir John Chester might have purchased the great house of Gayhurst, which was then for sale, and was purchased, with its estate, in 1704 by the son of Sir Nathan Wright, the Lord Keeper. Evidently, however, Sir John Chester preferred his ancestral seat. He was a well-known sportsman, and one of the Gentlemen of Queen Anne's Privy Chamber.



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DOVECOTE IN THE PARK.

"COUNTRY LIFE,"



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IN THE BILLIARD-ROOM.

COUNTRY LIFE.

The fifth baronet died in the year of his accession to the title, 1726, when another Sir John Chester, his brother, came into possession. The baronetcy became extinct on the death of the ninth baronet in 1769. The seventh baronet, who left no legitimate descendants, and whose uncle succeeded to the title, cut off the entail of the whole of the family estates, and left them

Colonel Charles Montague Chester, who did a good deal to restore Chicheley Hall, and died in 1879. He was the father of Mr. Charles Anthony Chester, and the old estate is still in the hands of the family, which represents, but not in blood, the old possessors of the place. Chicheley Hall is now the residence of Sir George Farrar, D.S.O., who gained this latter distinction



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THE BOUDOIR.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

to his maternal cousin, a stranger in blood, who assumed the name of Chester. This gentleman died in 1793, and is mentioned with respect by Cowper, who frequently visited Chicheley from Olney. Mr. Charles Chester succeeded, but, leaving no son, the property passed to his nephew, the Rev. Anthony Chester. The latter also dying without issue, the estate passed to his cousin and heir,

when serving as Major on the Staff of the Colonial Division in the late war in South Africa, and who had the further honour of being mentioned in despatches, thus carrying on the old traditions of loyalty to King and country which have been previously alluded to in this article as characteristic of the owners of this fine old country home.

THE WILD APPLE.

BY FIONA MACLEOD.

THE foam of the White Tide of blossom has been flung across the land. It is already ebbing from the black-thorn hedges; the wild-cherry herself is no longer so immaculately snow-white. It drifts on the wind that has wooed the wild-apple. The plum is like a reef swept with surf. Has not the laurustinus long been as cream-appled as, later, the elder will be in every hedgerow or green lane or cottage-garden? Not that all the tides of blossom are like fallen snow: is not the apple-bloom itself flushed with the hearts of roses? Think of the flowering almond, that cloud of well-heart pink: of the delicate bloom of the peach that lives on the south wind: of the greengold of the willow catkins: of the blazing yellow of the gorse: of the homely flowering-currant, which even by mid-March had hung out her gay tangle of pinky blooms: of the purple-red of the deadnettle in the ditch, and of the ruddy-hued fallaways of the poplar overhead. I wonder if in most places the flowering-currant is no more than an ordinary scrub. Here, where I write, there are several small trees of it, taller than the general growth of the lilac, tall as the laburnum, though at the time of their unloosening the one had not revealed her delicate mauve and white, while the other was still a miser of the countless gold he will now soon be spreading upon the wind. The pink blooms, carmine-ended where the five or six unfolded blossoms hang like fruit, droop in a roseal shower, as innumerable as the golden drops of the laburnum-rain or the suspended snow-flakes of the white lilac themselves. The brown bees have long discovered this flush of eden: their drowsily-sweet murmurous drone is as continuous as though these slow-swaying pastures were of linden-bloom and the hour the heart of summer.

Everywhere the largesse of Spring has followed her first penury in the scanty snow of the blackthorn on bare boughs. What, by the way, is the origin of the phrase 'Blackthorn-sorrow'? I heard it again recently, as though to say that summer was safely at hand so that now there was no more fear of the blackthorn sorrow. However, as later I hope to deal with the complex folklore of the Thorn, I need not let the subject delay me now, except to say that in the North-west Highlands I have heard the blackthorn called *Bròn Lochlannach*, the Northman's woe, literally Norse or Norland Sorrow or Mourning, . . . a legendary designation to which there is, I believe, a North-German analogue. The idea here is that the blackthorn sprang from the blood of the slain Norse invaders, the 'pagans from Lochlin' of mediæval Gaelic story. In many parts of the kingdom it is looked on askance, and cut sprays of it brought into a house are considered as a menace of ill, as a death-token even; and it has been surmised that this is due to some confused memory of a druidical or other early symbolism of the mingling of winter and summer, in other words of life and death, in the blackthorn's blossom-strewn leafless branches. It may be so, but does not seem to me likely, for by far the greater part of flower and tree folklore has little to do with such subtle conceptions. Too many of these are as vague and fantastical as that legend which says that one must not taste of the root of the peony if a woodpecker be in sight, or else the penalty may be blindness: a safe prognostication!

It is that other thorn which holds us now, that lovely torch of blossom which has taken to itself the name of the lovers'-month. Not that the hawthorn has unchallenged use of May as a name. In Devon the white lilac is often called the May, and elsewhere too the 'laylock' is spoken of as May-bloom. The laurustinus, again, is thus named in some parts of Somerset, and I have heard lilies-of-the-valley called May-blossoms. In Scotland I have often heard the hawthorn-in-bloom called Queen of the May and even Queen of the Meadow, though neither name properly belongs to it, and the latter is the inalienable title of the meadowsweet. But of all wild-blossom nothing surpasses in mass that of the hawthorn. It, truly, is the foam of the groves and hollows. From the south to the north it flows in a foaming tide. 'Bride of the world' I have heard it called in a Gaelic song, and long ago an ancient Celtic bard spoke of it lovingly . . . 'white is every green thorn, and honeysweet.'

But it is of the Apple I want to write just now, she whose coronal of blossom is surely loveliest of all fruitbearers: Bride of the Wind we may say—'Persephone herself' as a modern Italian poet calls her.

In the Highlands to-day the Apple (*Ubhal*), or the Wild-Apple or Crab-Apple (*Ubhal fadhaich*), is still common in woods and by streamsides. The bitter juice of the fruit is still used for sprains and bruises, and to-day as of old the Gaelic poet has no more frequent comparison of his sweetheart's charm than to the delicate-hued sweet-smelling apple—e.g.,

*Iseabail òg
An òr-fhuil bhuidhe—
Do ghruaidh mar ròs
'S do phòg mar ubhal,*

where the poet praises his Isabel of the yellow tresses and rose-flush cheek and kissing-mouth sweet as an apple. Once the apple was far more common in Scotland than it is now. An old authority, Solinus, says that Moray and all the North-East abounded in the third century with fruit-bearing apple-trees, and Buchanan even speaks of Inverness-shire as being unsurpassed for the fruit. Visitors to Iona to-day, who see it a sandy treeless isle, may hardly credit that it was once famous for its apple-orchards, and that too as late as the ninth century, till the monks of Iona were slain and the orchards destroyed by the ravaging vikings out of Norway. Beautiful Arran, too, was once lovelier still, so lovely with apple-blossom and ruddy yellow fruit that it was called *Emhain Abhlach*, the Avalon of the Gael.

To come in a waste place of tangled woods, or on some lap-wing-haunted pasture-edge, or in the heathy wilderness, on the wild-apple in bloom, is to know one of the most thrilling experiences of the Spring. As a rule the wild-apple stands solitary. Seen thus, it has often something of the remote element of dreamland. I came once, in the heart of a beechwood, on a single tree of laburnum, in full glory of dense unfallen gold. How did it come to be there, what wind had first brought it on the tides of birth, what friendly nurture had led the seedling to the sapling and the sapling to lovely youth? I wondered; but most I wondered at the sudden beauty, at the unexpected revelation of vistas other than those of the woodland, at the unloosening of the secret gates of dreams and the imagination. Faerie stood open. Angus Og, the Celtic Apollo Chrusokumos, the golden Baldur of the Gael, stood yonder just a moment ago, surely? Yonder, in the sunlit greenness, Midir of the Dew it was who passed swiftly among the bat-wings of disguising shadows? Was that Findabair going like a moonbeam, there in the sea-caverns of the green leaf? Or was it Fand, whose laughter the storm-thrush caught, long, long ago? Surely that was an echo of old forgotten song in the gloom of the beeches? Could it be Fedelm of the *Sidhe*, 'the young girl of the mouth of red berries, with voice sweeter than the strings of a curved harp, and skin showing like the snow of a single night'? And there, vanishing in the sunlit cataract of gold itself, like a rainbow behind falling water, was not that Niamh of the Golden Tresses? . . . Niamh, whose beauty was so great that the poets of the Other-world and those who died of love for her called her Love Entangled, she whose beauty filled three hundred years in the single hour that Fionn thought he was with her, in the days when the ancient world had suddenly grown old, and the little bell of Patrick the Christ-Bringer had tinkled sorrow and desolation and passing away across the Irish hills. Up among the devious green pathways of the travelling wood what lost king's voice was that? . . .

"Say, down those halls of Quiet
Doth he cry upon his Queen?
Or doth he sleep, contented
To dream of what has been?"

. . . what poet of long ago, living in a flame of passion still, a wandering breath for ever, went by on that drowsy wind?—

"Across the world my sorrow flies,
A-hunger for the grey and wistful
Beauty of Feithfailge's eyes."

Something of that emotion as of ancestral memories, as of an awakened past, of an unloosening of the imagination, may well come to any imaginative nature encountering suddenly a wild-apple in blossom in some solitary place. To people of a Celtic race or having a dominant Celtic strain, in particular, perhaps: for to the Gael, the Cymru and the Breton the Apple-tree is associated with his most sacred traditional beliefs. Of old it was sacrosanct. It was the Celtic Tree of Life, what Yggdrasil was to the ancient dreamers of Scandinavia. He cannot think of it, but of the kingdom of eternal youth: of *Emhain Abhlach*, of *Y Breasil*, of Avalon, of drowned Avillion. It waves over the lost Edens. In *Tir-na-n'Og* its boughs, heavy with blossom, hang above the foam of the last pale waters of doom. The tired islander, who has put away hunger and weariness and dreams and the old secret desire of the sword, lays himself down below its branches in Flatheanas, and hears the wild harpers of Rinn in a drowsy hum like the hum of wild bees. Grey-haired men and women on the shores of Connemara look out across the dim wave and see the waving of its boughs. The Breton peasant, standing at twilight on the rock-strewn beaches of Tregastel, will cross himself as he smells the fragrance of apple-blossom coming from sunken isles across the long rolling billows, and remember, perhaps, how of old in moonlit nights he has seen his keel drive through the yielding topmost branches of the woods of Avalon. Many poets have wandered in the secret valleys of Avillion, and have passed under boughs heavy with foam of dreams, and have forgotten all things and been uplifted in joy.

In the glens of the Land of Heart's Desire the tired singers of the world have become silent under the windless branches, snow-white in the moonshine, having found the Heart of Song.

The cross and death-coffer of applewood, the crown of wild-apple, the apple-staff, the poet's tablets of applewood, all the apple-myths and apple-legends, how could one tell of them in a few words. They are in old songs and old tales of all lands. Our Gaelic literature alone is fragrant with apple-bloom, is lovely with the flickering shadow of the apple-leaf, mysterious with symbol of fruit and the applewood that holds life and death in one embrace. Many readers will at once recall that lovely old tale of Bailè the Sweet-spoken and Ailinn Honeymouth, whose love was so great that when in their beautiful youth they died and were buried, one in a grave to the north and one in a grave to the south, grave-wood grew into grave-wood and green branches from the north and the south became one overhanging branch, under which the winds murmured of passion that winter-death could not kill nor the hot noons of summer lull into forgetfulness. There is an older and less-known *sgéul* of how Ana, that most ancient goddess, the Mother, after she had fashioned all the gods, and had made man out of rock and sand and water and the breathing of her breath, made woman out of the body of a wave of the sea and out of foam of apple-blossom and out of the wandering wind. And there are many tales that, in this way or a like way, have in them the mysterious wind of the wild-apple, many poems on whose shadowy waters float the rose-flusht snow of the scattered blossoms of dreams and desires. Was not the apple-blossom first stained through the inappeasable longing of a poet-king, who, yet living, had reached Y Breasil? Ulad saw there a garth of white blossom, and of this he gathered, and warmed all night against his breast, and at dawn breathed into them. When the sunbreak slid a rising line along the dawn he saw that what had been white blooms, made warm by his breath and flusht by the beating of his heart, was a woman. And how at the end Fand became once more a drift of white blossom upon the deerskin. For when the longing and the sorrow of all sorrows in the heart of Ulad wrapt his heart in flame, suddenly a wind-eddy scattered the blossoms upon the deerskin, so that they wavered hither and thither, but some were stained by the wandering fires of a rainbow that drifted out of the rose-red thickets of the dawn.

How far back do these apple-legends go? I know not. But when Aphrodite was born of the Italian foam she held an apple in her hand, as Asia or Eve looked long upon the fruit of life and death in Eden. In Hades itself was it not the lure and the bitterness of Tantalus? All old poems and tales, as I have said, have it, whether as legend, or dream, or metaphor, or as a simile even, as in the seventh-century MS. of the *Cain Adamnain*, where Adamnan's old mother cries *no maccan-sa suut a-mail bis ubull fo' tuind* . . . 'my dear son yonder is like an apple on a wave: [i.e.] little is his hold on the earth.' And those of us who have read, and remember, the *Prose Edda*, will recall how Iduna 'keeps in a box, Apples, which the gods, when they feel old age approaching, have only to taste to become young again.'

Is that too a dream, or is there no Ragnarök for the gods to fear? This at least we know, that as the winter-tide, the death-tide, eternally recurs, so is the foam-white Dream continually rewoven, so everlastingly does Spring come again in the green garment that is the symbol of immortality and wearing the white coronals of blossom which stand for the soul's inalienable hope, for the spirit's incalculable joy. For Avalon is not a dream. It is with us still. It is here indeed, though set within no frontiers, and unlimned in any chart. And even the apples of Iduna grow within reach: the least of us may eat of the fruit . . . till the coming of Ragnarök.

FROM THE FARMS.

INOCULATING THE SOIL.

THE expression which we have taken as the heading for this article has come to be generally applied to the application of nitragin to the soil. The history of this product is extremely interesting. It was an old fashion of husbandmen to plough leguminous crops into the ground for manurial purposes. In doing so they were following a tradition that was not based on scientific knowledge. The Department of Agriculture in the United States has recently made a thorough investigation of the subject, and has issued a brief account of the work done. As probably many of our readers know, the Germans have been equally busy on the same subject, and, as a matter of fact, pure cultures can be obtained in the United Kingdom from Germany at a cost of 2s. a tube, containing the quantity sufficient to treat the seed required for about three-fifths of an acre in the case of small seeds, such as clover, and about half that area in the case of such large seeds as peas, lupins, and beans. The best results have been obtained on newly-broken-up soil, or newly-cultivated moorland. The expert for the Board of Agriculture has given

most detailed directions for using the material in the Journal of the Board of Agriculture for February. In the United States' document there is an interesting sketch of the work done in investigating the question of the fixation of the nitragin by the root nodules of leguminous plants, and of the experiments that preceded the preparation of nitragin. The substance of the report will be found in the Journal of the Board of Agriculture for March, and deserves the careful attention of farmers. Between November, 1902, and November, 1904, the department distributed about 12,500 separate packages of inoculating material. On the reports received from those who tried it the opinion of the Board of Agriculture has been formed. In this respect the United States has shown itself extremely enterprising, and we can only wish that as brilliant an example had been set by England.

THE RICHNESS OF MILK.

In the eleventh annual report of the Agricultural Department of University College, Reading, there is a paragraph which owners of dairy herds will read with very great interest. It runs as follows: "A large number of samples of mixed milk and milk from individual cows have been examined. In some cases where complaints have been made by purchasers in regard to the poor fat contents of certain 'morning' churns consigned to them



E. A. Girdlestone. TENDING A LAMB.

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by farmers, it has been found that individual cows of the herd have given milk with less than 3 per cent. of fat. In all cases this has been met with in morning milk only. The deficiency in fat has always disappeared when the interval between the evening and morning milkings has been shortened. Many farmers try to improve the quality and bring it up to the legal standard by extra high feeding, but this rarely or never succeeds when the interval is too long, and attempts to improve matters in this way are of no avail. Whatever happens, the interval must be shortened, even if it means extra wages to the men." This points to a serious state of things. If a healthy cow does not produce milk which reaches the standard set by the Board of Agriculture, there would seem to be in that fact itself a *prima facie* case for either reconsidering the standard set up by the experts at Whitehall, or of improving the breed of cows in our dairy herds.

ROOKS AND FARMERS.

From accounts in the Scottish papers we notice that farmers in Teviotdale and other parts of Southern Scotland have, at their clubs, been taking council to induce their landlords to thin the rooks down. These birds have increased to an enormous extent, and though natural historians are agreed that when they exist in moderate numbers they are a service to husbandry, when

they multiply abnormally they become pests. One reason for their increase is, no doubt, that their destruction, both by natural foes and by man, has been practically stopped. Nearly all the larger birds of prey have been killed down to the point of extinction. The modern schoolboy is not such a nest-harrying child as his predecessors were, and rook-shooting—except as an amusement with rifles—has greatly diminished. Indeed, the taste for rook pie seems to have gone out altogether, though the time is not far off when it was esteemed a delicacy by rich and poor.

AMENDING THE BUILDING BYE-LAWS.

Our readers ought to be particularly interested in the little measure that has been drawn up under the name of Public

Health Acts (Amendment) Bill, as its main object is to ameliorate the tyranny of the rural building bye-laws. It consists of only five clauses, of which the first is that it is to be construed with the Public Health Act. The main clauses are exempting clauses; the idea is that certain buildings in the country should not be subject to the operation of any bye-law in respect to the structure of walls, foundations, roofs, floors, chimneys, or hearths. It would be a relief to those who are anxious to promote building in the villages if this Bill could be made into an Act of Parliament during the present session; but, with a Parliament nearing dissolution, and a Ministry preparing to meet the country, we doubt if a piece of work that is not showy, but only useful, will have much chance of becoming law.

LAMBING ON ROMNEY MARSHES.

THE illustrations which we show to-day are from a flock of sheep founded as far back as 1746, by the grandfather of Mr. Henry Rigden, the present owner. It consists of no fewer than 2,000 ewes, of which part are grazed on Romney Marsh and part on the uplands. The examples that we show illustrate the characteristics of the breed, which may be called a general purpose one, combining a good fleece of wool with a good carcase of mutton, and an extremely hardy constitution. It is a fact worth

noting that the best of our breeds of farmstock have originated from the bleakest districts of the country. In the fen district of



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EARLY DAYS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

East Anglia we have the first home of the Lincoln breed, and the country there does not differ so very much from that which stretches from Hythe to the river Rother, and from Dungeness to the Appledore. Sheep are said to be thicker upon Romney Marsh than upon any other part of Great Britain, and the thinly-sown population exists almost solely for the purpose of attending to them. Romney Marsh as a residence of human beings possesses some of the characteristics of the fenland; that is to say, the

atmosphere is damp, and inclined to produce rheumatism and the ills that are akin to it. But the sheep thrive



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POSING FOR THEIR PORTRAITS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



Copyright

A LAMING PEN.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

upon it exceedingly, and Mr. Rigden puts them to a very hard test. They literally live out of doors, and even the preparations for their lambing are conceived and carried out in the simplest possible manner. No elaborate houses are erected for the purpose, but a rough pen is formed, partially sheltered from the colder winds by the use of straw. Within a very short space, not more than a few hours, after coming into the world the healthy lamb is turned out on the marsh, and left to the care of its dam. The treatment, however, seems to suit the constitution of the animals, since they attain to size and strength under it. No doubt much has been done to help them in the way of introducing new blood, though it is probable that the defects of the original Romney Marsh breed have been considerably exaggerated by writers on agriculture, who describe them as having "broad feet, long stout limbs, narrow chests, flat sides, and great bellies."

At one time the rage was all for using Leicesters for the purpose of improvement, and in the middle of last century Professor David Low said, "It may be doubted if there exists a single long-woolled sheep in the county of Kent in which the influence of the new Leicester blood does not appear." Yet the fashion does not seem to have lasted long, for in 1855 his

successor wrote, "Attempts have been made at various times to introduce Leicester blood into the flocks, but they have not been altogether successful. The shape and points of the animal have been improved, and earlier maturity and aptitude for fattening obtained, while, at the same time, the size of the sheep has been somewhat diminished, and the fleece, though improved in staple, has been reduced in weight. It has also been found that if the Leicester blood predominates, or even exceeds a certain point, the natural hardihood of constitution is changed, and the sheep become too tender for their exposed pastures." Of late years some breeders have tried to cross Romneys with Down rams instead of Leicesters, but it has been found that the offspring are inferior to the pure breed for grazing purposes, and at the present moment there is a general reversion to the uncrossed type. During the last thirty years, however, the sheep must have undergone very great changes, as Professor Wilson relates that in his day they had "white heads and legs, a long and broad face with a tuft of wool on the forehead, no horns, a long and thin neck, a narrow breast, and moderate fore-quarters; the body was long with flattish sides and sharp chine; the loins wide



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MATERNAL CARES.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

and strong, the belly large, thighs broad and thick; the legs and feet large, with coarse bone and muscle." This description may be profitably contrasted with that given by Professor Wrightson in his book on "The Breeds and Management of Sheep": "The Romney Marsh or Kentish Long-woolled sheep of our day is of large size, and is in this respect scarcely excelled by any British breed excepting the Lincolns. A pen of three ewes, exhibited by Mr. Henry Rigden of Lyminge, at a recent show of the Smithfield Club, weighed 8cwt. 2qr. 24lb., which was only excelled by two pens of Lincoln ewes, which were respectively 9cwt. 1qr. 22lb. and 9cwt. 2qr. 14lb. The breed is white-faced, hornless, and inclined to be bareheaded. The wool is of long staple and great weight, and in general appearance the breed resembles the heavy long-woolled Lincoln race. Fine specimens are to be seen at our great shows, not only from the true Marsh district, but also from Sittingbourne and other localities of good land, of higher position."

It may not be an absolute test of the quality of a breed of sheep to look at its entries in the various shows, but there can be no doubt of the growing popularity of the Kentish breed.



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SHEARING.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

At all the shows in the South of England they are thoroughly well represented, and the judges at the Royal have frequently drawn attention to the continuous improvement that has taken place. For instance, in regard to the show of 1903, the remark they made was that the ram lambs were possibly the strongest ever exhibited. And in those days, when the exhibition was migratory, and was held at the extreme North of the kingdom, good representatives of Romney sheep could be seen as far away from their native habitat as Carlisle. The flock which we illustrate has been singularly successful in these competitions, and has taken no fewer than about 600 prizes. There is also a continuous demand in regard to these sheep for purposes of export, and it is easy to understand how they should commend themselves to the colonist who has large tracts of land at his disposal. It is absolutely necessary that his sheep should be of hardy constitution, and able for the most part to take care of themselves, because, if that were not so, his inability to give the individual attention would ultimately be the ruin of the flock. With that soundness of health the colonist wants naturally to secure as good a fleece as possible, and also as much mutton. These requirements are fulfilled by the Romneys to an extent not exceeded by any other breed, though that is not denying the fact that in each particular point they may be excelled. It would be possible to have better pelts, constitution, and also heavier sheep; but the three in combination—fleeces, mutton, and health—are more difficult to find. And this probably accounts in large measure for the continuous demand from abroad.

Romney Marsh in some respects has a resemblance to various other districts in England whose pastoral associations are more or less connected with sheep. There are records which show that after the Black Death and the Peasants' Rising, which had the effect of disposing landlords to give up the ancient manorial system and take to sheep-grazing as a more profitable pursuit, this tract of country was very soon



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IN THE ORCHARD.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

utilised for the purpose, and anyone familiar with it may easily learn from the conversation of the men themselves that shepherding is no occupation merely fulfilling a temporary purpose. It is a tradition handed down from



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A FINE TWO YEAR OLD.

"C.L."

long centuries of sheep-raising. The present writer on summer days has gone strolling about the neighbourhood, and very frequently got into conversation with one of the men tending his flock. He was fulfilling one of the many duties summer brings with it. Perhaps he had been engaged in dipping, and had finished with the last of his patients, or maybe there was a merry band who had been performing the annual washing of the sheep and had stopped for their luncheon-hour. But more often the encounter was with one of the individuals who wander over the marsh with the invariable and invaluable tar-bottle in his possession, ready to administer comfort or relief to any suffering member of his flock. But whoever the man might be, his mind was usually as full of sheep as are the persons in Mr. Hardy's famous novel "Far from the Madding Crowd." It has often been accounted a curious accomplishment that a shepherd should know the features of every individual sheep with which he has to deal, so that animals which, to the casual eye, seem all to resemble each other as much as peas in a pod, have each of them, in his eyes, marked characteristics of their own. But these shepherds laugh at this as being only elementary. They ask you to look at human beings, and though, to one who came from a long distance—say a Chinaman or a Japanese—Europeans may bear a strong resemblance to one another, yet familiarity shows that they differ extremely in size, in expression, and in their various features. So a man whose life from boyhood has been spent among sheep knows each as well as he knows his neighbours; but it is somewhat perplexing when, putting two together, he insists that the stranger should recognise the difference as vividly as it appears to his individual eye.



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YEARLING RAMS.

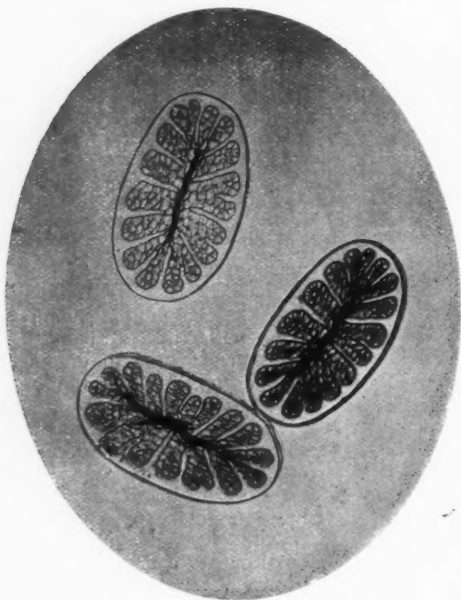
"COUNTRY LIFE."

THE HAIRS OF MAMMALS.

WHEN the hairs of various kinds of animals are examined under the microscope, the remarkably varied nature of their structure is very noticeable. Even if the specimens have had no preliminary preparation for microscopic inspection they are extremely interesting objects, but when carefully prepared and mounted afford unlimited scope for investigation. Generally speaking the hairs of mammals present much the same appearance to the naked eye, the chief distinction being found in size and colour. This apparent similarity is observable also in birds in the early stages of their existence. With very young birds the body is often covered with hair, or, as it is termed, "down." This down merely serves the purpose of keeping the possessor warm, and in course of time is gradually replaced by feathers, which, in addition to being a protective covering for the body, are necessary for the purposes of flight.

The distinction between the hairs of mammals and the feathers of fully-fledged birds is not so great as would appear at first sight. The quills of the porcupine and spines of the hedgehog, for instance, bearing a close resemblance to the quills of feathers, form connecting links between feathers and hairs.

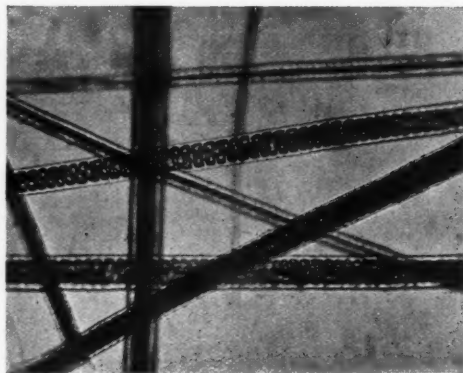
At present, however, we have only to consider the hairs of mammals. These hairs, when closely ex-



SECTIONS OF PECCARY HAIRS.

amined, differ to an enormous extent in both external and internal structure, and from the physiologist's standpoint range from the horns of the rhinoceros to the finest wool. The formation of hair takes place in a depression in the skin, which is known as the hair follicle. The hair is kept firmly in position in the follicle by a swelling at the base, which is termed the "bulb." Hairs are composed of two distinct parts, the cortex or exterior substance, and the medulla, or central portion. The cortex is composed of closely-connected horny scales of flattened and elongated shape. These scales overlap each other, but are so closely connected that, as a rule, no division is perceptible, even under the microscope, except in a prepared specimen. The scales can be separated by immersing the hair for some time in dilute sulphuric acid. An illustration of a hair which has been treated by acid is given here; the scales of the cortex are seen separating from the medulla.

The cortical portion gives the colour, strength, and flexibility of the hair. The medulla or pith is of less dense structure;



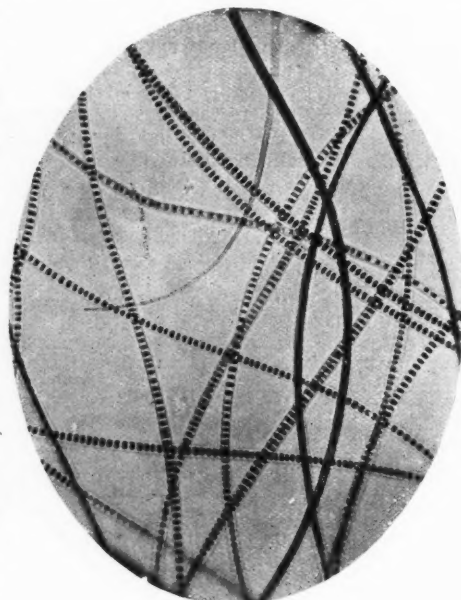
ENGLISH SQUIRREL.

here; in appearance it is not unlike a section of the stem of a plant.

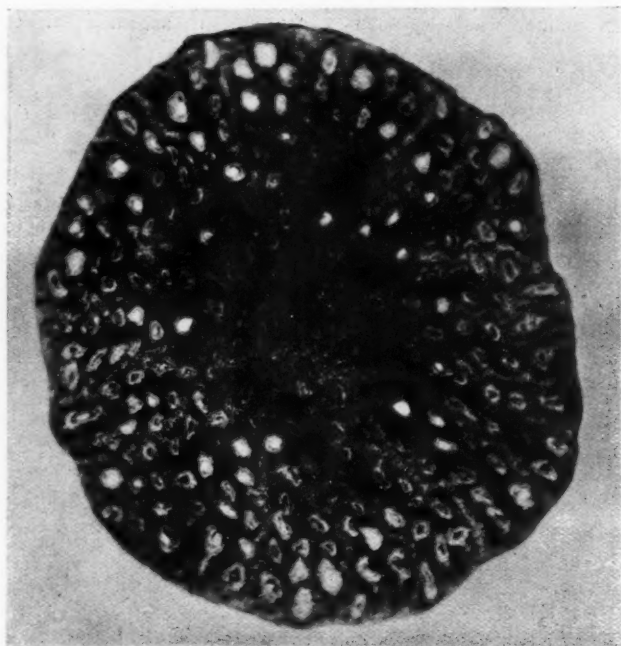
A curious form of hair is found in the bat tribe. The cortical cells project from the hair at regular intervals. This projection is seen in the accompanying photograph of the hairs of an English bat. The hair of the Indian bat has a still more striking appearance; the projecting scales form a series of points arranged in circles at regular intervals round the hair. The hair of the elephant is of a very large size, and has an easily-recognised structure. As will be seen in the photograph of a transverse section, it seems to be composed of an amalgamation of several hairs. The hair of the American wild pig or peccary has also a very interesting

the cells generally contain globules of fat but are sometimes filled only with air in which case they appear black when viewed under the microscope. The cortical is generally the largest portion of the hair, but in some cases the medulla is of considerable width, and the cortex forms a comparatively thin envelope to the pith.

One of the most striking deviations from the general nature of hairs is to be found in the quill of the porcupine, which is constructed to serve the purpose of a formidable defensive weapon. The quill is of close texture on the outside, the interior being of a more open structure. This formation gives both strength and lightness to the spine. A photo-micrograph of a section through a porcupine's quill is reproduced



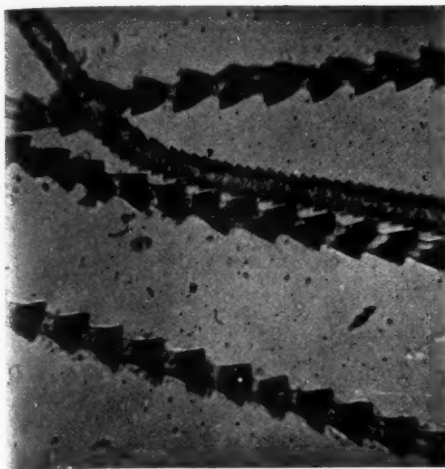
WILD RABBIT.



HAIR OF AFRICAN ELEPHANT—TRANSVERSE SECTION.

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ENGLISH BAT.

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J. I. PIGG.

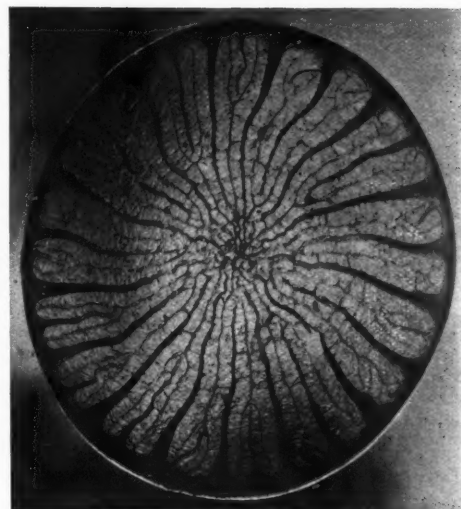
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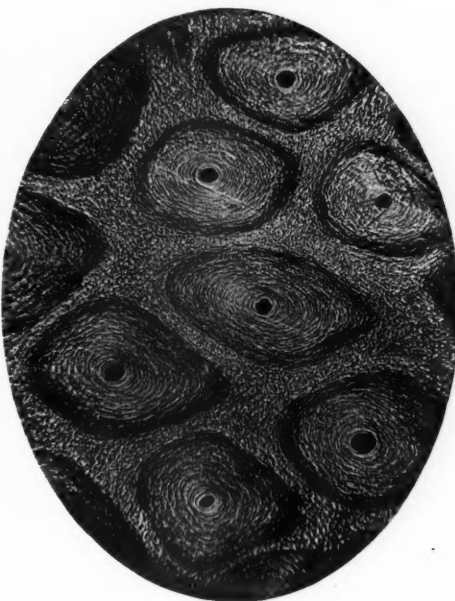
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With long neck sunk beneath the hunched-up wings, the beak hung upon its breast, its lengthy legs bent beneath, the piercing eye, however, ever intent, ever watching, the bird offers but a reverse idea of what it is when standing erect, or rising in flight. No one who sees a bittern for the first time dead, extended upon the ground, would recognise it as the same bird as it stands sentinel by the creek-side. As one passes up these Danube waterways, following them from their point of egress to the main river, it is almost an unbroken solitude which is encountered. There is nought to remind of the outer world beyond, nought to be seen but the wild bird life, the wild marsh nature within. At the time of flood, when first the bitterns arrive, only the fringe of willows marks the course of the creeks from the waste of waters everywhere around. As the flood subsides, and the marsh resumes its summer contour, the water of the creeks sinks beneath the level of the banks, the growth of reed and other marsh



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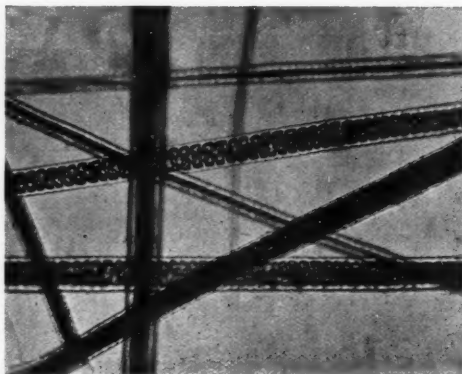
TIGER (NORMAL).



TIGER (CORTICAL SCALES SEPARATING).

THE HAIRS OF MAMMALS.

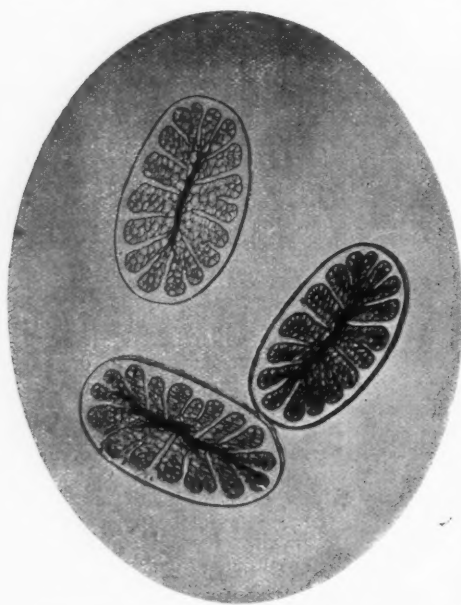
WHEN the hairs of various kinds of animals are examined under the microscope, the remarkably varied nature of their structure is very noticeable. Even if the specimens have had no preliminary preparation for microscopic inspection they are extremely interesting objects, but when carefully prepared and mounted afford unlimited scope for investigation. Generally speaking the hairs of mammals present much the same appearance to the naked eye, the chief distinction being found in size and colour. This apparent similarity is observable also in birds in the early stages of their existence. With very young birds the body is often covered with hair, or, as it is termed, "down." This down merely serves the purpose of keeping the possessor warm, and in course of time is gradually replaced by feathers, which, in addition to being a protective covering for the body, are necessary for the purposes of flight.



ENGLISH SQUIRREL.

The distinction between the hairs of mammals and the feathers of fully-fledged birds is not so great as would appear at first sight. The quills of the porcupine and spines of the hedgehog, for instance, bearing a close resemblance to the quills of feathers, form connecting links between feathers and hairs.

At present, however, we have only to consider the hairs of mammals. These hairs, when closely ex-



SECTIONS OF PECCARY HAIRS.

amined, differ to an enormous extent in both external and internal structure, and from the physiologist's standpoint range from the horns of the rhinoceros to the finest wool. The formation of hair takes place in a depression in the skin, which is known as the hair follicle. The hair is kept firmly in position in the follicle by a swelling at the base, which is termed the "bulb." Hairs are composed of two distinct parts, the cortex or exterior substance, and the medulla, or central portion. The cortex is composed of closely-connected horny scales of flattened and elongated shape. These scales overlap each other, but are so closely connected that, as a rule, no division is perceptible, even under the microscope, except in a prepared specimen. The scales can be separated by immersing the hair for some time in dilute sulphuric acid. An illustration of a hair which has been treated by acid is given here; the scales of the cortex are seen separating from the medulla.

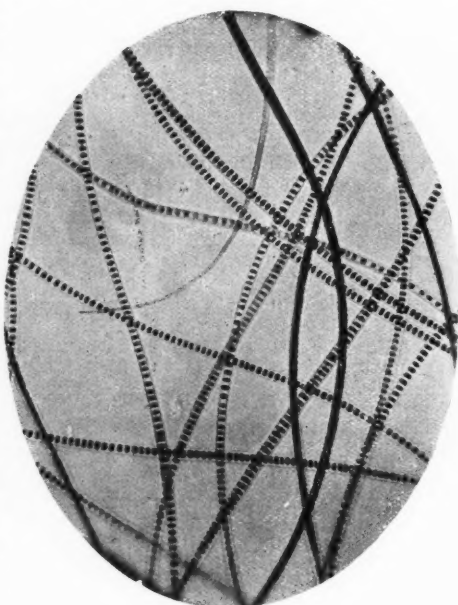
The cortical portion gives the colour, strength, and flexibility of the hair. The medulla or pith is of less dense structure;

the cells generally contain globules of fat, but are sometimes filled only with air in which case they appear black when viewed under the microscope. The cortical is generally the largest portion of the hair, but in some cases the medulla is of considerable width, and the cortex forms a comparatively thin envelope to the pith.

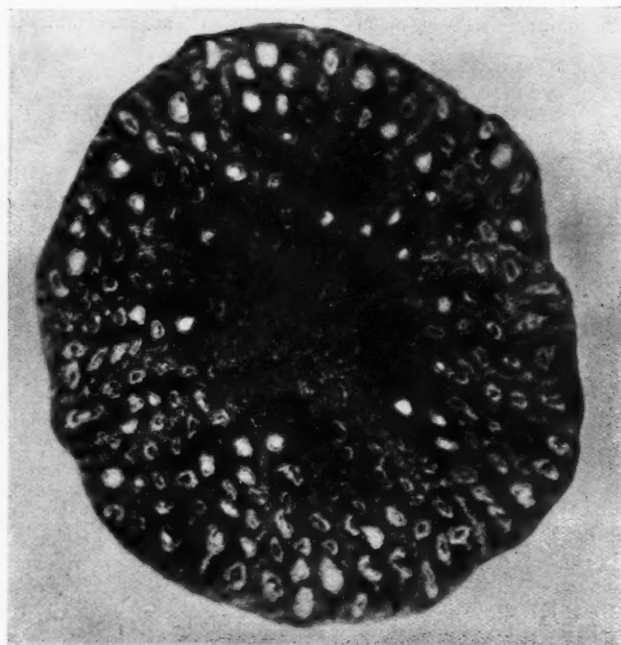
One of the most striking deviations from the general nature of hairs is to be found in the quill of the porcupine, which is constructed to serve the purpose of a formidable defensive weapon. The quill is of close texture on the outside, the interior being of a more open structure. This formation gives both strength and lightness to the spine. A photo-micrograph of a section through a porcupine's quill is reproduced

here; in appearance it is not unlike a section of the stem of a plant.

A curious form of hair is found in the bat tribe. The cortical cells project from the hair at regular intervals. This projection is seen in the accompanying photograph of the hairs of an English bat. The hair of the Indian bat has a still more striking appearance; the projecting scales form a series of points arranged in circles at regular intervals round the hair. The hair of the elephant is of a very large size, and has an easily-recognised structure. As will be seen in the photograph of a transverse section, it seems to be composed of an amalgamation of several hairs. The hair of the American wild pig or peccary has also a very interesting



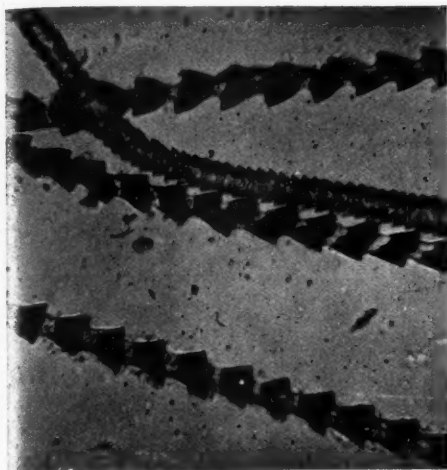
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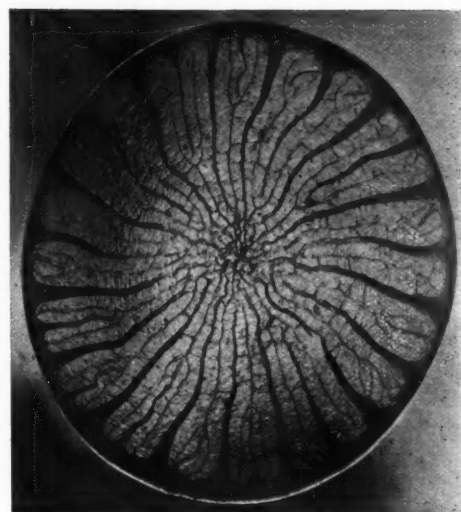
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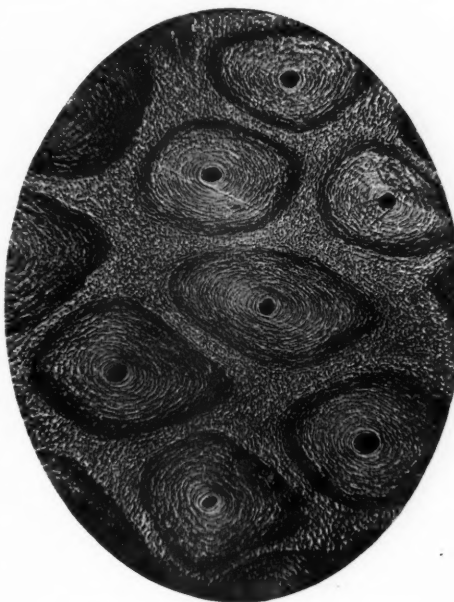
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material like the horns or antlers of the deer tribe. The horn of the prehistoric rhinoceros is in consequence missing when the skeleton of the animal is found. The rhino horn, however, though unable to stand the ravages of time, was impervious to the teeth of wolves and hyenas, and skulls have

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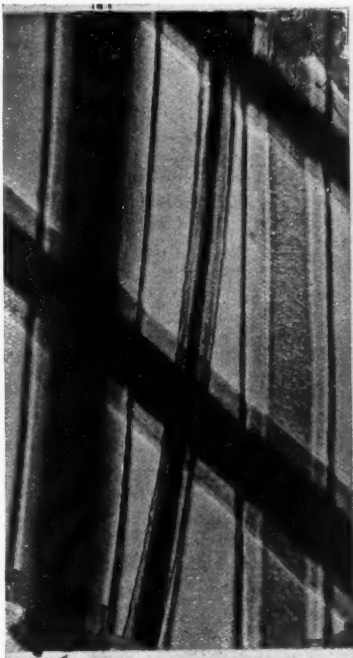
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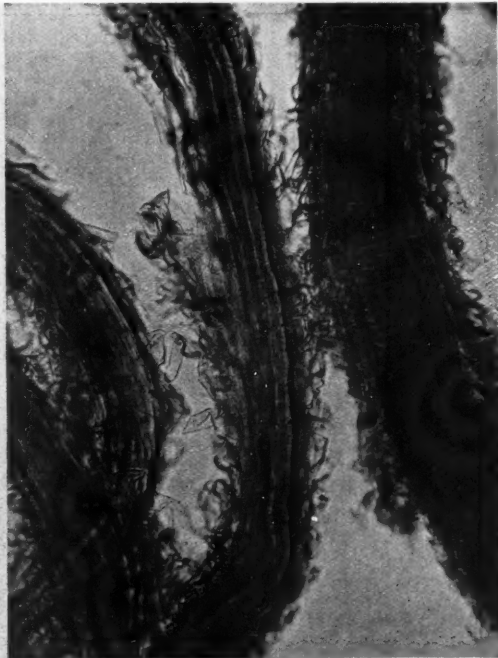
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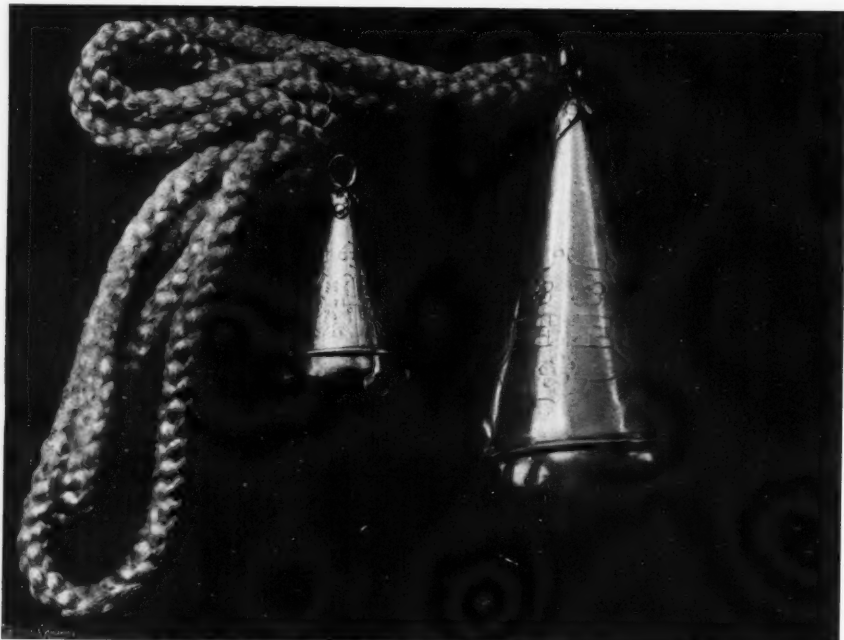
vegetation quickly springs from its muddy bed, insect, animal, and reptile life discovers itself upon every hand, and where before the bitterns were in evidence on every bare stump, and bough, and naked knoll, they are now couched among the rich foliage and luxuriant growth of water-plant. For the most part dozing the hours away during the great and glaring heat of the summer on the Danube marshes, these birds are but little in evidence during the day, unless you come upon them unawares, disturbing them in their seeming security, or when one flops from a post of observation to catch a basking fish or pounce upon a lizard sunning itself upon the bank.

Food they never lack in this their paradise, and leisurely they pursue it. Fish, frogs, and leeches in the water; lizards and beetles, shrews, mice, and voles on the land. Here are all in profusion and in every variety. In the remotest corners of the marsh they make their nests and rear their young with nought to hurry and nothing to disturb them save the herons, grey and white, the terns, the ducks, and a hundred more of other fowl pursuing the same peaceful vocation. It is but a short space before the small brood flies, and the bittern comes forth from retirement to the more open portions of the marsh, where from the time of spring flood till the threatening of winter frost it is one long summer of unfettered life for the birds with nothing to disturb them save the silent coming and going of occasional fishermen. The bitterns are at peace with all the world saving only the squabbles which their somewhat pugnacious nature brings upon them.

It is, however, at night time when the bitterns are at the height of their life's enjoyment in the Danube marshes. If you care to thread the creeks in the fisherman's canoe, braving the myriads of mosquitoes, risking the fever-stricken air and deafened by the croaking of countless frogs, it is possible to come amongst the bitterns in their haunts and observe them as by day in the weird light of the cloudless moon. It is then that their hoarse croak resounds on every side, as they drop, to rise again from the willows on every side, first one, as it is startled into flight, another, two, three, a dozen, a score; all circling, wheeling, they come like shadows, like shadows so depart as they again drop into their perching places amongst the trees. The flapping of their wings, the croaking of their cries startle the other life of the marsh into life and movement. Ghostly-white herons flash into the moonlight, ducks whirl up the creeks, fat old bull-frogs flop back into the water, rats and voles dart here and there in the gleams of moonlight, and a great splashing tells where some great pelican waddles down into the stream. Then, as the canoe slowly comes to rest amidst the ever-increasing water-lilies, the marsh again subsides into silence, and quiet once more reigns in the haunts of the bittern.

OLD SILVER RACING BELLS.

SMALL bells, both ecclesiastical and secular, in gold, silver, and bronze, are of great antiquity, and frequent references are made, in English documents of the Middle Ages, to the use of bells for decorative and sporting purposes. In a copy of the Roll of Purchases made for the Tournament of Windsor Park in the sixth year of the reign of Edward I., one Richard Paternoster provided 800 little bells for the horses. Illustrated instances have come down to us where the horses engaged in these tournaments are adorned with a collar round the neck covered with a row of small globular bells closely packed. At the marriage of Mary, daughter of Henry VII., with Charles, Prince of Castile, the horses were garnished with silver bells, and in the reign of Henry VIII. horse bells were of silver and globular in form, the Royal Plate of the latter period also including hawk bells of the more precious metal, gold.



THE PAISLEY BELLS.



THE LANARK BELL.

In the Gordon collection at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, are four very small globular bells of bronze, beautifully patinated, found with late Celtic and Roman antiquities at Wood Eaton, and these are in all probability the prototypes not only of the silver racing bells, such as those at Carlisle, but also of the bronze hawk bells, of which an interesting specimen may be seen in the celebrated Holbein portrait, now at the Hague, of Robert Cheseman, of Dormanswell, 1533, who is holding a hawk; and in other hawking pictures. The same type of globular bell was in use on the old censers, of silver and bronze, in the Abyssinian Church, and it is to be found also on a fine silver-gilt censer, of Roumanian goldsmiths' work, dated 1686, in the Treasure of Petrossa. According to the household accounts of the Lestranges of Hunstanton, from 1519 to 1578, these bronze hawk bells were of the value of 3d. each. Similar bells would seem to have been in use for dogs, for in an early sixteenth century inventory mention is made of the payment for a dozen couples of small bells for spaniels. This form of prize at cock-fights was quite common, and a silver cocking bell of the year 1655 is still extant.

The earliest existing silver racing bells in this country are the two in the possession of the Corporation of Carlisle. The larger of these is 2½ in. in diameter, and is gilt, and bears on a band surrounding its centre this engraved inscription: " + THE + SWEETES + HORSE + THES + BEL + TO + TAK + FOR + MI + LADE + DAKER + SAK." It was probably a prize offered by Elizabeth, daughter of George Talbot, fourth Earl of Shrewsbury, and wife of William Lord Dacre of Gillesland, who was Governour of Carlisle in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The smaller bell has a plain moulding round its centre, and is engraved with the date, 1599, and also the initials H.B.M.C., which are believed to represent "Henry Baines, Mayor of Carlisle." Neither bell is hall-marked, and therefore the exact year of their production cannot be ascertained, but they are probably not earlier than the first quarter of Elizabeth's reign. Carlisle Races were held on Kingmoor, about two miles outside the city, and created much excitement among the freemen and inhabitants.

At York Races, in 1607, the reward of victory was a small golden bell, and the records and inventories of the Corporations of Chester, Richmond, and other places supply instances of the silver racing bells given as prizes before the introduction of race cups:

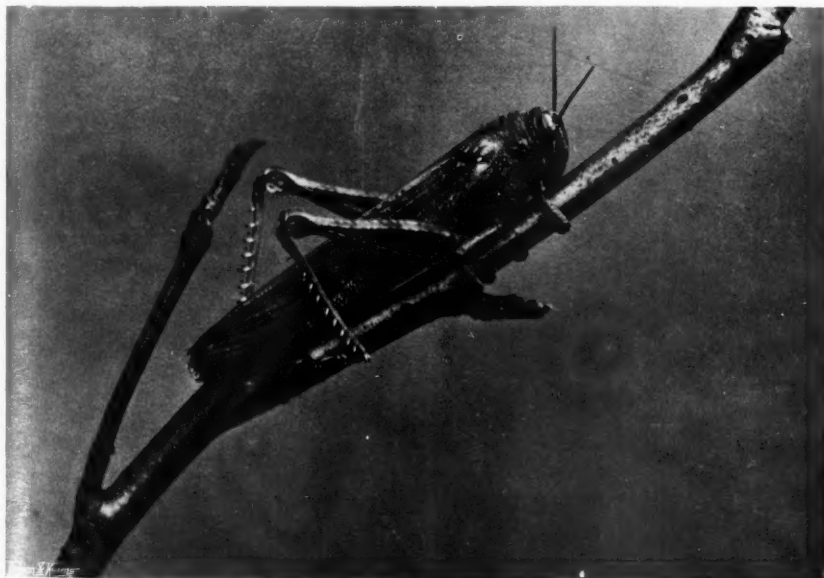
"Jockey and his horse were by their masters sent
To put in for the bell
They are to run and cannot miss the bell."

The bell was tied on the forehead of the winning horse, and from this old custom

arose the popular expression "to bear away the bell." In Scotland, if traditional evidence may be relied upon, horse-racing dates at least as far back as the reign of King William the Lion, who is said to have given a prize to the royal burgh of Lanark for the races there, and this prize was for long believed to be the identical old silver bell of Lanark, run for yearly to the present day, and which is here illustrated. This bell is 4in. high, excluding the handle, and measures 4in. in diameter at the mouth. The handle, which consists of a plain wire circle 1in. in diameter, rests upon a radiating ornament of six oak leaves, applied. The arms, engraved within a floral wreath, are those of the burgh of Lanark. It bears four marks, the first being the monogram of the maker, Robert Denneistoun, or Danielstoun, who was admitted a freeman of the Edinburgh goldsmiths on April 23rd, 1597; the second and third marks, which are believed by antiquarians to be unique in old Scotch plate, denote the quality of the silver—*deniers*—prescribed by the Acts of 1457 and 1483, though, as a matter of fact, the silver in this bell is barely of that standard; and the fourth mark, the monogram HL, is that of Henry Lindsay, who, like his brother craftsman, was a freeman of the Edinburgh goldsmiths, having been admitted on October 17th, 1587.

This bell, which is held by the winner for a year, has been mounted within recent years on a silver frame, supported by three eagles, double-headed, displayed, in allusion to the arms of Lanark; and from this are suspended several small silver shields engraved with the winners' names, from the year 1852 to the present time, the holder for this year being Lord Hamilton of Dalzell, whose horse, Lely, was the winner. The only shield boasting any antiquity is that on the extreme right in the illustration, and is engraved with this inscription: VIN. BE. ME. SIR. IOHNE. HAMILTON. OF. TRABROVN. 1628., and opposite, the winner's coat of arms. The following interesting notice appeared in 1661 in an Edinburgh newspaper, *Mercurius Caledonius*: "The horse-race at Lanark, instituted by King William about six hundred years since, but obstructed these twenty-three years by the iniquity of the times, is now restored by Sir John Wilkie of Foulden, as being loath so ancient a foundation should perish; and for that effect he hath given gratis a piece of plate of the accustomed value, with a silver bell and saddle to the second and third horse." Lanark Races had been suspended during the Commonwealth and revived at the Restoration.

The Corporation of Paisley owns two fine old silver bells of early seventeenth century date, of which illustrations appear here. The larger of the two, which is 4½in. long, with a diameter of 2½in., and weighs about 4½oz., is the bell referred to in the records of the Town Council of the date April 27th, 1608, viz.: "Act anent the silver Bell—Item, it is concluded that one silver bell be made of 4oz. weight with all diligence for one horse-race yearly, to be appointed within burgh bounds, and day for running thereof to be set down by advice of my Lord Earl of Abercorn, Lord Paisley and Kilpatrick." Covering the centre



of this bell is an unidentified shield of arms, a *fess*, *chequy*, *arg.* and *vert.* between three cinquefoils, between the initials O. P., probably those of one of the early winners. The smaller bell, which measures 2in. in length and 1in. in diameter, is similar in form, and is engraved with the date 1620 above a shield of arms between the initials H. O. Lengthy and minute details are given in the Council records of the period as to the management of the race down to the weighing in of the jockey. One of the first winners, if not actually the first, was New Crawford of Clobberhill. Horse-racing was an extremely popular form of sport in Scotland during the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, among the important towns holding races being Dumfries, Dunfermline, and Haddington, and at each of these places a silver bell was the coveted prize, but, alas! neither of these trophies has escaped destruction. E. ALFRED JONES.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PLANTING COVERTS FOR GAME.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Your pages are so widely read amongst game preservers that perhaps a word upon this subject may not be out of place. Anyone acquainted with the habits of game and trees must often have been struck with the lack of knowledge displayed, in many cases, in the selection of the trees, and in the sites fixed upon for game coverts; and on a large estate which I have recently been over this was very marked. To begin with the trees; where pheasants are the chief object in view, there is no better tree to plant than the spruce fir; it grows quickly, forms excellent covert, and all birds prefer its shade to that of almost any other tree. The flat frondose branches are chosen to roost upon in preference to those of any other of the conifers, and there is no tree that the woodcock loves so well to nestle under. Many of the less common species are just as suitable as *Abies excelsa* (the common or Norway spruce), but that tree, being the most available for general planting, may be taken as the type of all the rest. The silver firs are almost, if not quite, as good, and grow well upon some soils which are not suited to spruce, but they are rather slower in growth during the first few years after planting. The timber of the silver fir (where its commercial value may be an ulterior object) is rather inferior to that of the spruce. Larch is much preferred to Scotch pine by pheasants for roosting upon, and its timber is, of course, more valuable than that of any of the other coniferous trees, but it likes a drier situation than the spruce, and does not grow well in many districts. In order to succeed best spruce want shelter from high winds, and like plenty of room for the spread of their lower branches. They ought, therefore, to be planted rather further apart than most other trees, and if the covert is a new one, and the site is exposed, they should be chiefly kept in the middle and be surrounded by Scotch or other trees. They delight in damp situations, in which larch, and, indeed, few other trees will flourish, and very often it is just these spots which one likes to select as sites for game coverts, plenty of water being a *sine quâ non* for pheasants. Upon the estate just referred to, planting for game is being extensively carried out, but Scotch and larch are almost the only trees being used, and the sites chosen are mostly too wet for the latter, while the former by itself will never form a good covert for winged game. Oaks, upon the other hand, do well, and if the pines were mixed with that tree, or even with alders or birch, in the damper situations, the ultimate results from a sporting as well as from a commercial point of view would, I am sure, be much better.—L. G.

PERSEVERING ROBINS.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—I think the following may interest some of your readers. A pair of robins, desirous of building on the window-ledge of a small outside room, began to take leaves and moss, which they put on the narrow ledge, and which, as they put them down, dropped inside the room. This must have gone on for some days, as on Saturday a trug full of leaves and moss was swept out of the room. The robins have given up their attempt, and we hope have made their home with less trouble elsewhere. I wish I had a photograph of the trug full of leaves; you could hardly believe that two birds could have done such a lot in one week.—E. C. C., Sussex.

A CURIOUS NEST.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—I think you will be interested to hear of an extraordinary nest which was found in some grounds adjoining a churchyard near Chelworth. The nest has been built in a small *prunus* tree, and, though the interior is the same as the ordinary chaffinch's nest, the bird has made the exterior entirely of different coloured confetti, woven together with cobwebs. It is to be supposed she picked it up after a village wedding. The nest, situated as it is all among the blossom of the *prunus*, looks itself like the flowers.—W. H. S.

LOCUSTS IN ENGLAND.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—From time to time single specimens of the locust are picked up in this country, and, as a rule, it may be taken that they are derelicts blown astray on some current of winds from the vast hordes that work such havoc in Algeria or Southern Europe. It is known in small numbers in Portugal and as far North as Switzerland, while in Turcomania, some few years ago, a body of Russian troops were literally unable to move for some hours, the ground being rendered slippery as ice by these insects. Their power of flight is enormous, some having been picked up as far as 1,200 miles out from land in the Atlantic. The one illustrated here was found the other day in a fruiterer's shop in Lancashire, and a suggestion is made that it may have come over in a box of oranges, which at this time of the year is probable enough.—H.

REVERSION TO WILD HABITS AT BREEDING-TIME.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—The following instances of this tendency may be of interest to your readers: A remarkably quiet collie, when about to have puppies, always went off to a distance from the house, scraped out a deep burrow in some secluded spot, and there remained with her new family until discovered. A sow, too, usually contrived to disappear before farrowing, and in some brake

make a lair for her litter. I noticed, too, a curious thing about the lambs of a ewe who was noted for constantly rearing fine twins. The lambs invariably were to be seen sleeping on their mother's head.—T. S. B.

DR. LYDEKKER'S THEORY.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—The very interesting paragraphs I have seen in your paper referring to Mr. R. Lydekker's theory of the thorough-bred being descended from a distinct breed of horses originally inhabiting India, have made me pen these few lines to you about a type quite distinct in itself. I refer to the Kathiawar



breed, which has always appeared to me to be of a very thorough-bred stock. I am judging from the few I have seen owned and ridden in these parts (Behar). They were generally a light-bodied pony or small horse, with good bone and sinews like whipcord. They have the peculiarity that the tips of their ears curl inwards, often forming quite a hook. They are generally a bundle of nerves, sensitive and excitable, good mounts for long solitary journeys in the blazing Indian sun, but quite objectionable for cross-country work, or riding in company, though I possess in a mare of the breed an exception to my remarks, in that she is quite placid in company. No doubt a man in the Punjab could give better information than I can about these horses. I imagine their origin, it it could be traced by a competent man interested in horses and such theories, would show them to be, if not of distinct stock, at least originally of a carefully-selected type.—F. H. MURDOCH, Sunbursah Fy., Barouli P.O.

CARRYING POWER OF EAGLES.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Referring to the most interesting article in your issue of April 15th, on "The Nesting of the Golden Eagle in Montana," I should like to point out, in regard to the carrying power of eagles, which is therein raised, that the weight of an average-sized golden eagle will run from 10lb. to 12lb., and, judging from analogy, I should expect the bird to be able to carry at least its own weight in the shape of prey, probably a good deal more. The largest peregrine falcon I ever handled weighed 2lb. 12oz. This was an adult female. A young male, weighed on the same day, scaled exactly 1lb. less. A blackcock weighs from 3lb. to 4lb. (perhaps a little more in some cases), and a peregrine has been known to carry a blackcock to its eyrie on the Bass Rock, the nearest place where the bird could have been killed being about three miles distant. Although it has nothing to do with the carrying powers of the birds, the mention of the falcon and the black game recalls to mind a curious incident which happened to me with these birds some years ago. I was fishing a mountain burn, and in passing it stopped at a shepherd's cottage, where the man was busy setting potatoes in his garden, and was surprised to see a very fine blackcock lying on the ground beside him. The bird was quite newly dead, and the shepherd told me that he "had been nearly gliffed out o' his wits" a few minutes before by a great rush of wings above him, and the bird's falling with a crash within a few feet of where he was working, while a falcon screamed in the air high above him. There was a net of peregrines in a cliff, a little more than a mile distant, but, needless to say, on this occasion the shepherd relieved the falcon from taxing his powers in carrying the blackcock thither!—LICHEN GREY.



witnessed, similar services held on quay or pier in Breton villages at the commencement of the fishing season.—H. P.

SKINNING MOLES.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—A method of skinning moles that meets with much favour here is as follows: The skin is cut right round the neck, the feet are cut off, and the skin is then turned back at the neck and pulled off inside out. A straight cut down the belly is then ensured. The whole operation takes less than a minute, and is as clean as such an operation can possibly be.—E. W. C., Herts.

PREJUDICE AGAINST CURLEW.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—I have been reading that most interesting article, "The Tribe of the Plover." I do not know if it is common knowledge that the Ayrshire peasant has a particular hatred for the peaseweep, and never fails to destroy their nests when he finds a chance. The reason is this. During the persecutions of the Covenanters the birds were useful allies to the soldiers. Not troubling to hunt all the moss hags, the dragoons used to keep to the hilltops, only a few of their comrades riding along the low ground. If any hiding Covenanter found himself in danger, he would creep away through the heather, and the actions and crying of the plovers soon betrayed the poor wretch to the watchers on the hills. This has not been forgotten or forgiven. Ayrshire folk will not eat peaseweeps; they are "only fit for English."—T. TREHERNE BARTON.

A CURIOUS PRIMROSE GROWTH.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—When primroses are plentiful, few can have failed to notice the great variation in their blooms. Specimens are quite often found with (instead of the usual five) six, seven, eight, or even more petals, though over eight they may be described as rather rudimentary attempts at petals. Once the eye gets accustomed to their fuller appearance these may be easily detected among hundreds of ordinary ones. In the garden curious growths of this flower are even more common, and in the accompanying illustration a calyx is shown nearly equal in size to the flower, and as its colour is the same as that of the petals, the impression is given of two complete blooms on one stem.—P.

POISONING CATS.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—It is with sincerest sympathy that I have read your correspondent's complaint of the wanton and wicked cruelty of those fiends in human shape who poison their neighbours' pet cats. There have been so many such cases recently that I am glad you are directing public attention to the matter. A neighbour nursed her poisoned cat back to recovery, but the next time it went out a second and deadly dose was administered. Another neighbour's cat, a gentle, playful white one, was treated in the same way, and our own pet cat (a most affectionate and winsome little animal), has, we fear, also succumbed to the same inhuman monster, whose only excuse is that he owns a garden—evidently deeming this wholesale "massacre of the innocents" quite justifiable on this account!—A LOVER OF ANIMALS.

BLESSING THE SHEEP ON AN ENGLISH FARM.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—I am sending you a photograph of a scene which is comparatively rare in this country, though an old custom where the Romish Church holds sway. Mr. Blackmore has written a graphic description of the parson holding service in a Devonshire cornfield at the beginning of harvest, and cutting the first sheaf. And most of your readers will have read of, or